Troublous Times.

1670-71.

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Troublous Times;

OR,

Leaves from the Note-Book of the Rev. Mr. *John Hicks*, an ejected Nonconformist Minister, 1670—71.

TRANSCRIBED BY

JANE BOWRING CRANCH,

With an Introduction by the

REV. CHARLES STANFORD

CHR.—"If you will go with us, you must go against wind and tide; you must also own religion in his rags, as well as when in his silver slippers; and stand by him, too, when bound in irons, as well as when he walketh the streets with applause"—*Pilgrim's Progress, Part I.*

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Introduction.

THIS is a story of old Puritan life. The scene is the little town of Kingsbridge, situated in the extreme south of Devon. Just after the Act of Uniformity had become the law of the land, this place was the abode of several ejected ministers—"men of whom the world was not worthy." Mr. Tooker occupied a small farm at Norden, nearly a third of a mile distant. Mr. Burdwood rented land about four miles out in the country, at Batson, a village noted for its orchards. In the town itself, dwelt Mr. John Hicks, Mr. Jellinger, and Mr. Quicke, sometime vicar of the parish. Here, also, the learned Mr. George Hughes ended his days. The church is adorned by "a fair marble monument," which one of his rich friends erected to his memory, and which bears a Latin inscription, from the pen of his son-in-law, Mr. John Howe.

From family traditions, as well as from standard biographies, the lady to whom we are indebted for these chapters, has collected many interesting notices of our Kingsbridge worthies, and woven the various threads of information thus obtained into a graceful but unpretending narrative. Though in the form of fiction, every leading incident is a well-authenticated fact. Even the imaginary conversations convey the real sentiments, and are alive with the very spirit of the fathers who are thus represented. This we know from their writings. Perhaps we may at first be inclined to think that the style for which Mr. Hicks is made answerable, had become somewhat out of date by the time when his "Notes" are assumed to have been written; but this thought is checked when we remember that a certain antique simplicity of speech, and many quaint fashions of address, lingered in the remote country towns long after they had dropped out of use in the rest of the world.

The chief personage in the company to which we are introduced is Mr. John Hicks. In 1662, while measures were under discussion in high places, with a view to the firmer establishment of the national religion, he waited, with much concern, for the result. He was then a young clergyman, a true Puritan as to his faith, but holding what would now be called moderate opinions on ecclesiastical questions; and professing himself willing to continue

his ministry in the Church of England, if a few slight alterations were made in its forms, and if he should only be required to submit to its ancient terms of subscription. It was, therefore, a bitter disappointment to find, on the publication of the Bartholomew Act, that it was designed to operate as a highly penal measure; that the Prayer Book had only been altered in order to make it impossible for the Puritans to accept it; and that, still further, every Anglican clergyman was required to declare his unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing the book contained, on pain of exclusion from his office.

One day, when in conversation with an old University friend, who was trying to persuade him to conform, "I do believe," said he, "that these conditions are only designed and contrived on purpose to prevent our public preaching, and to keep us out of the Church." To which his friend replied, with much simplicity, "I judge that it is so, for a bishop in Ireland, whose name I have forgotten, told me the very same."

His final thoughts on the subject are thus expressed in his own language:—"The terms of the particular law made in 1662, were not only new, but so strict and severe, that I could never have satisfaction in my own conscience, after all endeavours used for a compliance therewith, and a conformity thereto. . . . The giving assent

and consent has been too hard and difficult for me to comply with." He therefore gave up his benefice, and came with his wife and children to Kingsbridge. We should like to know more of that young wife. She was "Mistress Howe" when he first met with her, and perhaps some future research may show that she was related to a certain friend and neighbour of his—the writer of "The Living Temple." All we know of her is, that she shared her husband's convictions, and helped him cheerfully to bear his cross. How he and his family fared for the next nine years will be seen in these pages. The account breaks off abruptly, when it reaches the year 1671, just as Mr. Hicks seems about to enter upon a new series of adventures. Up to this point, the facts of his life are faithfully reported, and so interesting are they, that every reader will wish to learn the particulars of his subsequent career. If, as the transcriber relates, and as local tradition seems to indicate, he entertained at this time the idea of emigration to New England, some circumstance, now unknown, occurring at the last moment, must have hindered him from carrying his plan into effect, for we find him almost immediately afterwards taking part in public transactions. In 1672 he was deputed, by a large number of gentlemen and others in the west of England, to present, in their name, an address of thanks to the King, for the indulgence which he had just granted to the Non-

conformists. A few months later, a vote of the Commons set aside this indulgence as an illegal exercise of the prerogative, and troubles for conscience' sake were renewed with more than their former severity. In consequence of this change, Mr. Hicks left Kingsbridge, and became the minister of a congregation at Portsmouth. While he was there, Calamy informs us that a visit was paid to the town by the King; that the governor, principal officers, and many of the inhabitants, went to Portsdown to meet him; and that Mr. Hicks, who was one of the company, was honoured by the King's especial notice. It does not appear, however, that this momentary flash of light from the royal countenance had any effect in dispersing the gloom of his lot, for we learn that, shortly after, persecution again compelled him to leave his home. What was his next dwelling-place is now uncertain, but his last is ascertained from an old indictment, in which he is described as "John Hicks, clerk, of Keynsham, near Bristol."

He seems to have suffered even more than his companions from the trials of the times. For this he sometimes had reason to blame himself. It has often been remarked that every strong element in character is in danger of filling more than its due place, and of becoming error by excess. It was thus with him. He was generous, frank, and daring to a fault; apt to feel quickly, speak plainly,

and act with headlong haste. On one occasion, when a warrant was out against him from the Kingsbridge justices for preaching without sanction of law, and two messengers, speaking vain-glorious and uncivil things, came to take him in charge, he did, to their great surprise, lift his cane, and after a few words of exhortation touching the right government of the tongue, proceeded to chastise them both full soundly. At their particular request, he then granted them his pardon, and departed, leaving each dignitary to find his way home, as best he might; there to tell, if it so pleased him, that he had that very night been "robbed, murdered, and likewise put in fears of his life." A mild and charitable version of this affair will be found in the "Note-book"—just the kind of account that we should expect from the good man himself; but it is mentioned now, partly as an illustration of his high spirit, and partly because we suspect that this adventure with the constables caused much of the vexation that troubled him for the rest of his days. In their sacred persons, both Church and State had been grievously insulted. It was a grave offence thus to defy the executive power of the law, and though the offender at once hastened up to London, made a full confession to his Majesty, and obtained his gracious absolution, the deed was never forgiven or forgotten by his ill-wishers in the country. They soon set afloat the most extravagant stories to his disadvantage. He

was a conspirator; he was a fifth-monarchy man; he was a Baptist; he had assisted Colonel Blood to steal the regalia from the Tower; he, with the colonel and two other desperadoes, had rescued an officer, named Mason, from eight soldiers who were conveying him from London to take his trial at the York assizes, for a share in the great northern plot; he had shot a poor traveller who was journeying for protection with that valorous guard; he had been concerned with Lord Russell and others in treasonable practices. Of course, all these reports were the wildest fabrications, but the one well-known instance of his reckless action seemed to give them a colour of probability. They answered their intended effect—they furnished the magistrates with a pretext for giving him every possible annoyance, and his persecution from place to place was doubtless owing in a large measure to the prejudice they created against him. Henceforth, he was a mark for malice, and "the archers wounded him sorely." Even his old friends became shy in their carriage towards him; many a discreet Nonconformist, who was trying by strokes of cautious and skilful expediency to steer his own way through "troublous times," watched him with much apprehension, and many a meek recluse besides, felt safest out of his company.

At length, hurried on by the impulses of his ardent nature, in 1685 he became a volunteer in

the army of the Duke of Monmouth, who was then making his desperate attempt to grasp the Crown. Strange as it may seem, however, Mr. Hicks never lost the loyal spirit which is rightly ascribed to him in these pages. This rash engagement was consistent with the most romantic theories respecting the fidelity due from a subject to his prince. To the very last he held it to be "unlawful, under any pretence whatever, to take up arms against the rightful sovereign;" but, unhappily, he was deceived into the belief that the Duke of Monmouth was his "rightful sovereign." Convinced that he was the legitimate heir to King Charles, kept out of his rights by a vile conspiracy, he judged that if he had not followed the Duke's standard, he "would not have been clear from the sin of rebellion." "This," he assures us, "along with a vigorous and vehement zeal for the Protestant religion," alone prompted him to take the course upon which he decided.

Zeal for the Protestant religion was the grand motive to the rising in the West. This rising has been called "the Dissenting Rebellion," but it should rather be regarded as the last struggle and outburst of the old historical Puritanism. The special opinions of Nonconformists as to Church or State had nothing to do with it. Dissenters formed the majority of Monmouth's adherents, but only because they were in pre-eminence the true Puritans,

and therefore the true Protestants of the day. To all appearance, Popery was about to ruin England for ever, and these men rose, resolved, if possible, to avert the dread calamity. They were mistaken in their line of action, mistaken in their choice of a leader, still more mistaken in striving to win a spiritual victory by carnal force. But they were not mistaken in their estimate of the evil they meant to resist, or of the good they meant to fight for. The sin of their enterprise consisted in the use of wrong means to accomplish right ends; but they had no suspicion that the means they used were wrong. Multitudes were led astray by the very passion and enthusiasm of their concern for the interests of truth and righteousness. It was a high-souled infatuation, and we may almost say "the light that led astray was light from heaven."

On the 6th of July, as the result of the action at Sedgemoor, the cause was lost. Sorrowful words were written in some of the old Dissenting church-books, in memory of brethren who had perished on that day. One such document, which is still preserved, concludes in this language:—"Thus these mighty men who had potency with God, and jeopardized their lives in the high places of the field for the cause of Christ, fell in the midst of battle." Two days after the battle, Monmouth was tracked to his last sad hiding-place

amongst the fern. Every day multitudes of fugitives were found and reserved for a dreadful fate. Mr. Hicks escaped, and contrived to remain in concealment for about three weeks. At the end of this time, having reached Warminster, he despatched a person on a journey of twenty-six miles, to the house of Lady L'Isle, to ask her if she would grant an asylum to him and Mr. Richard Nelthorpe, an attorney, who was his companion. According to the messenger, her reply was, "She did not know but that she might." After consideration, she desired them to come on Tuesday night, the 30th of July. In this way she had sheltered many a royalist soldier in the Civil Wars, and many a hunted minister since. Mr. Hicks could not be aware that she was now incurring any greater risk than on former occasions. He had not yet been convicted of any political offence; his name was not in any proclamation. She doubtless knew the nature of his danger, although, from wise forethought, in case of any future questioning, both she and the messenger had avoided any direct allusion to it. At the hour appointed, therefore, he and Nelthorpe, "booted and spurred," arrived at her gates. To prevent any possibility of mistake, Mr. Hicks at once told her all the circumstances in explicit language. It was now out of her power to say, in the event of any legal inquiry, that she had not been told who her

guests were. It might *now* prove a dangerous thing to give them shelter, and, as the best thing that could be done, she sent her bailiff to a magistrate with information of their arrival, contriving facilities for their escape in the interval.

For the last two days, however, treachery had been at work. Colonel Penruddock had been made acquainted with the whole of the original plan of flight. He could easily have taken both victims on their way, but he afterwards told Lady L'Isle that he only waited until she, too, was in his power. Her late husband had been one of Cromwell's lords. In defence of his own government, Cromwell had been a terrible scourge to the Colonel's family; hence he felt fierce hatred towards any person who had in any way been associated with that hated name. A few hours after the two fugitives had been watched into the house, they were taken by Penruddock's soldiers, and their benefactress was arrested at the same time. At the close of August, the lady was brought to Winchester, to answer for the capital crime of harbouring traitors. "The imaginary trial of Faithful," says a famous essayist, "before a jury composed of the personified Vices, was just and merciful compared with the real trial of Alice L'Isle before that tribunal where all the Vices sat in the person of Jefferies." She was infirm with extreme age, she had passed her life in deeds of piety and kindness,

even the prejudiced Tory gentry all held her in high esteem, and her poor neighbours regarded her with an enthusiasm of admiring love; but the laughing, shouting, cursing Judge was so bent on her destruction, that he strained the law to effect it, and on the second day of the trial gave directions that Alice L'Isle should be burned alive that very afternoon. The sentence was afterwards commuted from burning to beheading, and the execution was put off five days.

All this time Mr. Hicks was a prisoner at Salisbury, "grievously afflicted," as he says, by the fate of his generous friend. He was brought to Dorchester for trial, and on the fourth of September was sentenced to die. Some of his friends rode up to Whitehall, and sought an interview with the King to pray for a mitigation of the sentence. They found, on their arrival, that the adverse party, probably expecting that this step would be taken, had already been eagerly at work there to inflame the feeling that existed against him. It had been said, that he was the very person who had urged Monmouth to take the title of King, although it was known that he had not even seen the Duke, until some days after that proclamation had been made. It had been said, that he had been seen at a certain time riding about in the western counties, to enlist volunteers for the rebel army, although it was known that he was at that very

time in a distant part of the kingdom. Unhappily, the King was in the mood for believing all that could be said to the prisoner's disadvantage. Still there was hope. Something might yet be done for their friend by the influence of his younger brother, Dr. George Hicks, the Dean of Worcester. To understand the value attached to this gentleman's good word, we must here introduce a short account of him.

Since the opening of Charles the Second's reign, the time when he left the University, he had been the stout advocate of all popular doctrines. He was a high Churchman, and a sound Royalist. "The King," said he, "hath his authority inherently, not from his electors, but from God, even as Christ is head of His church." In one of his later pamphlets, he laboured to prove that if King James should "be pleased to massacre all his troops, as Maximian had massacred the Theban legion, it would be their duty to pile their arms, and meekly to receive the crown of martyrdom." It is but fair to say, that these appear to have been his genuine convictions, and it is pleasing to add, that he had hitherto suffered no inconvenience through holding them. Conscience had only allured him into paths of peace, and virtue had met with its full reward. First he went to Scotland as a chaplain to the Duke of Lauderdale, patron of orthodoxy, and prince of proficients in the art of using the chain, the rack, and

the thumbscrew, for the advancement of religion. Next, he was distinguished by receiving public praise from Archbishop Sharpe. The University of St. Andrews, and afterwards that of Oxford, created him Doctor of Divinity, the honour being accompanied in each instance by acknowledgments of the remarkable services he had rendered to the Church of England. He was appointed Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty, became Vicar of All Hallows, Barking, and was at last rewarded by promotion to a Deanery. If any effectual intercessor could have been found for the hapless prisoner, this was the man. No other person had a chance of success. Sad to say, bigotry had petrified natural affection; and when he was implored to speak for his brother, he replied, "I will never speak for a fanatic."* The prisoner's fate was sealed.

* Dr. George Hicks was well versed in primitive Christian literature, and was, besides, the best Teutonic scholar of his day. His fame now rests on this basis, but in his lifetime he was chiefly renowned for the energy and controversial skill with which he defended the doctrines of "divine right and passive obedience." Whatever considerations might have first influenced him in the adoption of these tenets, he became a thorough believer in them. The best proof of this appeared in his refusal to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, for which refusal he was deprived of all his ecclesiastical honours. Most of the clergy who had taken the place of the ejected ministers, and the great majority of the rest, held the same opinions as a most sacred part of their religion. From their loud and devout advocacy of them, it might have been expected that considerably more than "two thousand" would have submitted to deprival when the

"For the last twenty years," said Mr. Hicks, "I have never been without some apprehensions of a violent death; and though I yet do not know when or where I shall die, but expect death every day. . . . I hope that, through the grace and strength of Christ, when that message is brought to me . . . neither my lips, flesh, nor heart shall tremble. . . . How far I die for His cause will be judged at the last day." But though he trembled not on his own account, the thought of his wife and family shook the strong man with emotion. He had married a second time; he would be forced to leave many young children, besides two daughters by his former marriage, who were still under his care. There was no certain provision for them, for his own property would be forfeited, and his wife's estate was coveted by her brother, a Royalist, who was then adopting artful contrivances to secure it, with every prospect of success. The storm of hideous and furious wickedness, which had been

crisis came; but, instead of such an event, only about four hundred made the sacrifice, and about twenty-nine thirtieths of the profession submitted. Dr. Hicks was consistent to the last. A copy of the *Daily Courant*, in 1716, contains the report of an instrument of institution to priest's orders by Dr. Hicks, in which he signs himself, "Georgius Hickes, permissione divinâ Episcopus Suffrageneus Thetfordiensis." This was truly "the absurd practice of an absurd creed," but it places him in honourable contrast to the thousands of his former clerical associates, who though professing the same creed, and with the same strength of religious conviction, chose rather to renounce it than give up their benefices. He was born in 1642, and died in 1715.

increasing since the Restoration, was now at its worst, and his family would be left helpless in the midst of it, for the home which had sheltered them to the present hour, was about to drop like a warm nest from a broken bough.

If we may trust the authority of a note by Anthony Wood, Mr. Hicks was beheaded. He was put to death at Glastonbury, October 6, 1685. The report of the address which he delivered before execution occupies four closely-printed folio pages. Much of it is taken up in refutation of calumnies, and in defence of his last actions. After what has here been said, no portion of this need be quoted; but a few sentences on other matters may be given with propriety, and ought to be read with interest.

"I die," said he, "owning my ministry and nonconformity, for which I have suffered so much, and which doth now obstruct the King's grace and mercy to me: for as I chose it not constrainedly, but clearly from the dictates of my own conscience, judging it to be the cause of God, and to have more of divine truth in it than that which is contrary thereto, so now I see no cause to repent of it, nor to recede from it, not questioning but God will own it at the last day. . . . Though I could not wade through nor conquer the difficulty (of subscription), yet I censure not those that did it; and I believe that after the hottest disputes and most vehement contests between Conformist and

Nonconformist, there are of both parties who will be glorified in heaven hereafter. According to the 29th Article of the Church of England, a visible church is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, the sacraments of the Lord duly administered according to God's ordinance, and all things maintained that are requisite and necessary to salvation: so with such a church have I held the most intimate communion, and with such, did I live, would I hold it. But I would not on that account be so incorporated with any church as to exclude me from, and render me incapable of, holding communion with other churches. I was never strongly bound up to any form of ecclesiastical government, but any under which a pure and undefiled religion doth flourish, and which contains and really practises holiness, and advances the kingdom of God in the world, that can I approve of, and would willingly live under, were I to live.

"I bless God for all my sufferings, and particularly for this last, for the benefit and fruit of it, by God's sanctifying them to me, have been great; hereby I have been effectually convinced of the vanity of the world, and of my own sinfulness by nature and practice, and to see that to be sin which I never saw before, and to be more thoroughly humbled for what I now know to be sin, not only of omission, but of commission also; hereby I have

been brought to a more thorough, deep, inward sense of the absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ to justify me, and He hath been made much more dear and precious to my soul than ever He was before.

"I die a deeply humbled, self-judging, and self-condemning sinner, abhorring my many and great iniquities, and myself for them, earnestly desiring full redemption from the bonds of corruption, under which I have groaned so many years, longing for a more perfect conformity to the most holy and glorious God, the only infinite, pure Being; thirsting for a perfect diffusion of His grace through all the faculties of my soul, panting after perfect spiritual life and liberty, and a consummate love to my dearest Jesus, who is an all-comprehensive good, that so I may be satisfied with His love for ever. A vigorous and vehement zeal for the Protestant religion, and a belief I had in the Duke's legitimacy, hath involved me in this ignominious death; yet, through true faith in the blood of Jesus, there is a passage from it to eternal life—from these bitter sorrows to the fulness of sweetest joys that are in His presence, and from these sharp bodily pains to those most pure pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore; and, blessed be God, such a death as this cannot hinder Christ's changing of my vile body, and fashioning it like unto His own glorious body in the general resurrection day.

" Having such full bodily vigour and strength,—such perfect health, notwithstanding my age, predominating in me, hath made it more difficult to die than if I had been clogged and encumbered with infirmities, and made to stoop and bow under prevailing distempers, which many times make men weary of life, and desire to die. This, in conjunction with many other things highly gratifying and pleasing to sense, which I must leave for ever, strengthens and heightens the difficulty, and begets a greater regret and reluctancy in my will to have this earthly house of my tabernacle dissolved, and my soul to dislodge and quit the same. But now, when the black and gloomy shades of death do overspread me, I can say, to the glory of God's most free and powerful grace, true faith hath in some measure changed the difficulty into a facility and ease of dying: it hath very much subdued the reluctancy of my will against it, for it makes future things present, and invisible things visible; and doth realize and substantiate the same to me; so hereby, blessed be God, I have obtained a greater victory over sense, the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. . . . . Shall my soul clasp and cling to these mortal and perishing things? Shall it earnestly desire and thirst for muddy streams, when by an eye of faith I can look into the indeficient, inexhaustible, and purest fountain, the immense and immensurate ocean of divine

good, hoping to drink thereof, and bathe my soul therein for ever?"

He may be said to have died in the act of preaching the Gospel, for his address closed in a long strain of impassioned appeal on the necessity of faith in Christ, and of a change of heart wrought by the Spirit of God, in order to entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Thus did John Hicks finish his course. His conduct at the outset of his ministry commands our unmingled admiration. Gradually, his vital energy and public spirit betrayed him into excessive and disproportionate feeling on account of the temporal wrongs and sorrows of the church. It is right to make politics religious, but he was tempted to make religion political. By this he lost the holy peace and tender spirituality of better days; though his piety, if shaded for a time, shone out gloriously in his dying hour. During the period of which this Notebook is a memorial, he was in "the kindness of his youth." The graces of his life were then in their first fresh beauty, untouched by blight from a worldly atmosphere. Then it was that he wrote his book on "The Excellency of the Heavenly Substance." He then lived as "a pilgrim and stranger on the earth." It might have been his portrait that Christian saw in the house of the Interpreter,—"A picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall, and this was the fashion of it: It had eyes lift up to heaven,

the best of books in its hand, the law of truth was written upon its lips, the world was behind its back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head." It will be matter of thankfulness if our young Nonconformists take this opportunity of becoming acquainted with him as he was then, and of visiting in his company the old homes and conventicles of Kingsbridge, there to know the principles for which their fathers suffered, and to see the serene courage with which they fought their good fight. Let us hope that many may be charmed into an imitation of the simplicity, nobleness and power of the Puritan character, so, that becoming "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," they may share the same inheritance.

A sentence may be allowed in parting, with reference to the survivors of Mr. Hicks. He had said in his farewell speech, "The care of my most dear wife and a great many children I cast upon God, who, I pray, will be better than the best of husbands unto her, and the best of fathers unto them." They were not forsaken. It is understood that his widow found a home in the house of the youngest of his two brothers, Dr. Ralph Hicks, a physician, and that in various ways the education of his children was wisely cared for. We find that, in 1712, William, the second son, was rector of Broughton Giffard, in Wiltshire.

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Chapter I.

Wherein the Rev. Mr. Hicks gives some Account of his Past Life—Reflections on entering Kingsbridge—Prospect of finding Quiet there disappointed.

MY pen and inkhorn lying convenient on the table before me, I cannot refrain using them, though little after my wonted happy, tranquil practice, and yet methinks 'twill somewhat ease my heart, and may not prove altogether unedifying, if I note down a few of the traits and features of those troublous times in which our lot is cast, the evils and distractions whereof have reached the most quiet nooks and hidden corners of the country; yea, even into such a very little out-of-the-world place as this, where, to my sorrow, I am now a dweller. But holding no further parley with moments that do seem to fly faster than the sands drop in the hour-glass at my elbow, I will, briefly as may be, relate a few particulars concerning my early life, and how I came to

seek a home in Kingsbridge, of which, when I first set eyes upon it, I said, "Sure, a peaceable spirit that craveth a resting-place upon earth, may find it *there*, if nowhere else." But a sorer mistake—as these uneasy jottings of mine, written from time to time, as opportunity serves, will testify—was never made by man.

I was born in the year 1633, at Moorhouse, in Yorkshire. My father and mother were descended from what are called families of consideration. My mother was truly a person of figure, who passed her youth in the atmosphere of a Court; from the flatteries and seductions of which she came out pure and unscathed, the tincture of her courtly training alone perceptible in a most rare and winning graciousness of manner and deportment, that in no wise detracted from, but rather tended to adorn and commend, the beauty of her Christian life and conversation, to such as are ofttimes more observant of the settings of a jewel than the precious thing itself. How much I loved her my pen can never write, nor my tongue tell. When she has been a-walking, I have watched her graceful shadow in the sunshine, and almost wished I were that shadow, because then I never could be parted from her.

My father was a devout man, who lived in the fear of God; but being somewhat of an austere turn, he ruled his children and his household with a firm hand, sparing not precept, nor the rod either,

when he judged it needful for his son's correction. Though by nature I was of an uncommon quick and lively spirit, the careful, tender teachings of my mother, her prayers, and the exceeding loveliness of her example, deeply impressed my heart, even as a boy, with a sense of the value of those heavenly things which alone are worthy the serious pursuit and possession of an immortal soul. And those impressions, received from the gentle lips of one now so long time a "saint in light," when my spirit was fresh in the dew of its youth, did not vanish, were not scorched nor dried up in the noon of manhood; and by the grace of God her blessed death did so confirm and strengthen them, that as soon as it became necessary for me to make choice of a calling, I besought my good father to let me be entered at one of the Universities, that I might be duly qualified for a minister, which, with his most hearty approval, was accordingly done. He hardly lived long enough to see me ordained, but in his last blessing conveyed to me, in a solemn, affecting manner, the joy he felt at having a son to leave behind him, who, he was pleased to say, would, he doubted not, prove a faithful, painstaking preacher of "the Gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Immediately after my ordination, I was appointed a living in Devonshire, and I lost no time in bring-

ing there a wife—a pious, fair young gentlewoman, with whom I lived in all the content which might be expected from a wedlock so happily assorted as ours.

Upon the restoration to the throne of his present Majesty—(who I pray fervently may be preserved in his high estate, and blessed with that wisdom from above which shall make him worthy of it)—'twas hoped that mildness and moderation touching matters of religious opinion and discipline would largely prevail in the councils of the realm, and likewise have found advocates in those who had access to the royal ear; and they about him who loved their country's and their sovereign's weal, did most sincerely avise that a just and tolerant policy might be pursued. For a while they seemed to have weight with the King; but ah! the gay Court, with its enticements and allurements, its falsehood and hollowness, proved the stronger and more powerful. On the framing of those late disastrous laws affecting church government and the rights of conscience, which have sent so many hundreds of godly, learned, and right loyal gentlemen from their homes into banishment, I perceived signs of the coming present storm; and when the Bartholomew Act had really passed, no further choice was left. I must either conform to that which my conscience and God's word refused to sanction, or be thrust out from my living, and thrown on the

world without any certain means of support whatsoever.

I do not deny but that I had a sharp struggle with the tempter, and there was one most tender point, on which he plied me sorely. So feeling my own weakness, I made instant and special prayer to God, that my wife might be brought to see these things in the same light I did. True and loving as she was, I dreaded some natural womanish opposition on her part, concerning this surrender of *all* our present means of living, and future worldly prospects to boot. Then our young children were so inexpressibly dear. Yet, while my mind was in this toss, what a gracious answer the Lord in mercy vouchsafed me, and at the moment the Evil One was busy a-whispering in my heart, somewhat to this effect—"If thou hadst only thyself to care for, John Hicks, thy Bible and thy staff would be enough for thee; but now wilt thou become like him who 'careth for the things of this world, how he may please his wife.'" The bitter pang such thought gave, made me hesitate no longer. I went straight to her, and, without reserve, declared what, through grace, I was fully set of purpose to do. She heard me without interruption, but at length, as I expected, fell a-weeping. At sight of her tears, I turned away, and from the depth of my soul prayed silently—"Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me;" then, swifter than lightning,

flashed across my mind those words, "He that loveth [wife] father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." "And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Like one that heard a living voice, I answered aloud, "Yea, I will leave all things to follow thee, my Heavenly Master, and count it joy if called upon to lay down my life for thy sake."

Hereupon, with her face pale, yet something wonderfully sweet and settled in its aspect, my wife came softly towards me, and very tenderly besought that I would not think meanly of her on account of the weakness my words had surprised her into—"Though," continued she, "that which you have unburthened yourself of is by me not altogether unexpected. For these many months past I have perceived a struggle going on in your breast; and now that I know all 'tis fitting I should know, I say from my heart, if we be forced to live upon bread and water, and by our labour can scarce earn it, and instead of a cassock you wear a russet coat, *I* shall love you none the less, and more I cannot. Dear husband, do that which is right in the sight of God and your own conscience."

"Good wife," was my rejoinder, "by God's blessing you have removed a trouble that lay heavy on my soul. 'Tis passing sweet to feel we are not

only 'one flesh,' but something even nearer and diviner still, of *one mind*, in our Lord Jesus Christ, 'as being heirs together of the grace of life.'"

After my ejectment from my living, it became necessary that I should seek some other home, as soon as might be, for my family. The severance from the flock, over which I had been, I trust, a watchful shepherd, filled me with anguish. They, for their part, craved earnestly that I would still remain among them, pledging themselves that I and mine should lack neither food nor raiment, whilst they had a groat left; but a procedure of this sort, I foresaw clearly, might vex and harass my successor, and likewise greatly injure those poor honest folk who loved me, and whom I loved, so that, when the time of our parting came, I could not help exclaiming in the words of Paul, "What mean ye to weep, and break mine heart?"

Guided by the advice of certain godly friends, I came to this very little town of Kingsbridge, most delectably situate in the extreme south of Devonshire. Ah, keenly do I recall the feelings with which, while trudging after the cart that contained my wife and little ones and household stuff—I caught sight of the taper-pointed steeple of Kingsbridge Church, which doth form so meet a centre for the houses clustered around it; and though my shadow waxed long as a giant's, in the rays of the setting sun, I halted to gaze upon the beauteous

scene before me. In one direction I discerned a line of hills standing out, distinct and clear, as a wall of sapphire, against the summer sky; beholding thus from afar their purple summits, my thoughts were unconsciously lifted up, and carried beyond their utmost everlasting bounds: then my eyes rested upon a piece of water, so land-locked by fertile fields and green pastures, sloping gently down to its brink, as to present the lovely appearance of a fair, unruffled lake. The air of sweetness and quiet brooding over all things stole into my soul, which yet grew gradually oppressed with sorrowful reflection.

"The founders," thought I, "of that very church before me, whose dainty spire riseth so straightly and loftily towards the heavens, walked themselves in darkness, though they knew it not. Age after age passed away, and then came the first faint glimmering of that bright dawn, which seemed to harbinger a brighter day. The thick curtain of spiritual night, which had so long time shrouded the land, was fringed with light at its edges; it rose and spread, daily it waxed stronger and more glorious. Anon the boy-king Edward died, and his Papist sister reigned in his stead. Verily, "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held," "which came out of great tribulation," will yet rise up against her in judgment. This Queen was gathered to her

fathers, and another filled the throne: still, certain of God's chosen people found little rest, at last less mercy, under the imperious sceptre of that great princess. She too departed; and near half a century of misrule made the land wail for the dead lioness once so jealous of its glory. Then did the Lord see fit to raise up a man who, if neither free from the flaws nor the sins which belong to our fallen nature, was yet made a mighty instrument for the furtherance of religious liberty. In his day the boon was granted which God designed for every creature who calleth upon His holy name: freedom to worship Him according to the dictates of that mysterious inward sense which men call conscience. Truly when Oliver Cromwell died, children of martyred saints abroad, as well as those of the faithful at home, might with lamentation cry, "There is a great man fallen this day in Israel." And now to such as these are the times again fraught with evil. Almighty and most merciful Saviour, when will men begin to practise in all its fulness, with regard to their fellow-men, thy heavenly precept, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you?"

Thus musing, I entered Kingsbridge, hoping to find here bread and shelter, and a peaceable home for my family. I was not altogether disappointed. Conjointly with other faithful suffering brethren, I had large encouragement to preach, at a sufficiently commodious meeting-house, taking beside every oppor-

tunity that offered for doing so abroad. I loved my great Master's service (what other may compare with it?) and He blessed my feeble labours, so that I lacked neither Christian consolation nor companionship;—true, my purse was often without a tester in it, but He who "heareth the young ravens when they cry" never suffered my children to want a meal; and though my wife had been delicately bred, so sweetly did she conform to our very altered worldly circumstances, showing me, by little tender actions rather than words, how readily and pleasantly she could bear this change for my—nay not my, but Christ's sake,—ordering our narrow means with such housewifely care as to "owe no man anything," that I, observing her prudent, gentle, and most affectionate carriage, felt a deeper love, a warmer admiration for her than in the flowery days of courtship, or those of our young, untried, smiling, wedded love. But the unpeaceableness and commotion of these sad latter months have, as I said at the beginning of my paper, spread over the whole land, and reached into places scarce known before. It showeth, in no little degree, how restless, active, and searching a thing, the spirit of persecution must be, in that it should ever find out Kingsbridge at all, and, alack! having found it, soon stir up cruel foes, to put the late enactments in such force against us, that the doors of our meeting-house are nailed up, and the benches and windows broken. It would

now be as much as our lives are worth to venture there. So at this present time, when we assemble ourselves together for worship, we are constrained to meet in bye-roads, or distant fields, or steal like thieves into each other's houses during the watches of the night. Not a few kind hearts among the townsfolk pity our misfortunes. But they durst not show it, save in a covert way, for in our immediate neighbourhood we have a bitter enemy in Squire Reynells, a magistrate, and another still harder to escape, in the lusty person of Master Beare, a country gentleman of good estate; he hath a familiar, ever ready to do his bidding, in the town constable, John Lucas. This sorry fellow is chief of a band of spies and eavesdroppers, who, under cover of the Conventicle Act, work us all the woe and mischief they can, till, like one of old, we are ready to cry,—

"Our heart is faint for those things; our eyes are dim."

"Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it."

"Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; thy throne is from generation to generation."

"Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us for so long a time?"

Chapter II.

The Rev. Mr. Hicks attends a Theological Disputation—Unwelcome Visitors arrive in his Absence.

YESTERDAY, about sunrise, I heard the expected low knock of Master Burdwood at my garden-gate. Being already dressed, I ran down and admitted him on the instant. Early as the hour was, he had walked a good distance from the country in order to bear me company at the meeting for theologic disputation—with divers matters of spiritual discipline, besides other weighty affairs under consideration by our Nonconformist brethren—designed to be holden that day in the house of a certain gentleman, well-affected towards us, full twenty miles distant from Kingsbridge.

In less troublous times we had been wont for this purpose to confer together, either at Exon, or some other town of repute in the county; but the whole aspect of things is now so changed for the worse concerning us, that 'tis only by the gracious

sufferance—I might almost say, though my heart and pen heartily mislike the mean sentiment this word conveys, the *connivance*—of a few influential personages—the noble gentleman I have just referred to is one of them—we are able to enjoy this highly-prized and salutary privilege at all. Of cruel necessity, for the present it must keep a season in abeyance; but while a spark of liberty is left in England, can never quite be extinguished.

Shortly after Master Burdwood's arrival, poor Master Christian Jellinger, who dwelleth at the extreme end of the town, came also to my gate. I knew his hollow cough, and hasted to let him in, for he was avised of our purpose, and would very gladly have gone along with us, but this his infirmities hindered. Master Jellinger's spirit, lodged in a weak, sickly, crazy body, is ofttimes overcast with melancholy, as with a cloud. When I've essayed to cheer our drooping brother by remarking "that the nature of clouds is not to remain fixed and settled; they swiftly pass away, and then the shining of the sun appeareth all the brighter by reason of the gloom which has preceded it," he, with a sigh, did answer, "Master Hicks, you have living sunshine in your heart; mine is a barred prison it may never enter." Since his ejectment from his good living he preacheth seldom, but his pen lies not idle; a portion of its produce he now showed us, in numerous letters of a surprising length, filled with

solid truth, if expressed in somewhat ornate and diffuse style. These he charged me straitly deliver to certain reverend ministers, who would be present at the disputation. Master Jellinger then proceeded to make his letters up exceeding carefully, in a parcel so large I could scarce thrust it down the widest of my pockets, and when gotten there 'twas heavy enough to draw my coat awry, which Brother Burdwood perceiving, began to laugh; whereupon I rather tartly reproved him, for Master Jellinger, from us, needeth all the more polite tenderness, seeing he was reared in foreign parts; and to the Kingsbridge folk, when first he came hither, he seemed as strange as if he had been born in another planet, instead of another country. But if the town-gossips—of which sort there be pretty many for so small and hid a place—seek to pry into his concerns, he cloaketh himself in a kind of moody reserve, which their scissors are not sharp enow to cut an eye-hole through.

My wife upon this particular morning, having got up before the lark had left his little nest in the moist grass, the wood was a-sparkling and crackling merrily upon her well-swept hearth, and the porringers set out in neat order. When I handed Master Jellinger our great Bible, most sonorously did he read therefrom the 121st Psalm, laying a peculiar feeling stress upon the last verse, to which I heard a very sweet, low voice close beside me fervently

respond the "Amen." Master Burdwood next prayed. Few men have richer or more copious gift that way than he. Ere rising from our knees I likewise earnestly implored a blessing.

Breakfast being quickly ready, we partook pleasantly together of the savoury porridge. That finished, I told my wife I had so ordered as to return the same night; and again promising anxious Master Jellinger I would strive to remember the least of his requests, we lovingly bid each other God-speed, and Brother Burdwood and I set forth in such brisk, lively manner, that by eight o'the clock we were well advanced on our journey. To pass the time profitably he and I began a discourse touching our several Christian experience, each acknowledging to the other how clearly the gracious, immediate, and overruling providence of the Almighty showed itself in the daily—yea, hourly, concerns of ourselves and families. It was to the full as apparent in very little and humble things as in those we considered the chief turning-points of life. My good friend, when he left the University, had, like myself, a living presented him. Refusing to conform, ejection followed, and he was likewise denied the prosecuting certain plans, which to a person of his scholarship appeared feasible, for the supporting himself and family. In this situation, though a gentleman of very ancient descent, he, with the little money left him, considered it no

harm to rent a few acres of land, on which he and his young sons may be seen labouring like plain husbandmen—Master Burdwood preaching beside, whenever opportunity serves, to the numbers who flock to hear him.

"Paul," quoth he, "both wrote and preached—*how* grandly, *how* gloriously—as an inspired apostle of the Lord; yet Paul worked with his own hands, rather than be chargeable to any. And is it not better for me and mine to live hardly and fare poorly, than grow burthensome to others? I am *not* ashamed to dig, and when I can no longer dig, neither shall I be ashamed to accept thankfully the morsel given me for Christian love and pity; but I and my dear children prefer earning, with God's blessing, our honest bread in the sweat of our brow, while we are able."

Such is noble Master James Burdwood, and all good men that know, are constrained to respect, as much as love him. Proceeding on our way, he observed to me, "How hard it seemeth, Brother Hicks, at the first, for godly folk, yet how precious it proveth to them afterwards,—the learning to 'walk by faith, not sight.' You and I may be made more fully to master this holy lesson than now we wot of."

"That is also my own belief," replied I. "Our present condition is painful and mortifying to the flesh: if it become worse, still, from the depths of

sorrow and humiliation, our Lord can cause arise a sweetness and consolation never proved before. Do you know I often feel more peace and comfort, more of Christ's presence in my soul, in my straits and poverty, than when I was at ease concerning things temporal?"

"Then long, for your soul's health, may you be kept poor," said Master Burdwood, smiling. "But," he rejoined, "my own heart bears testimony to the truth of what you have been describing. Poverty like ours, my brother, hath not unfrequently precious riches, which this world's wealthy ones little reck the value of. Just as the barrenest ground on earth is ofttimes found nearest to veins of the most precious ore. 'Tis easy, yea, sometimes pleasant, I trow, for the carnal, when they are i' the vein, to give of their abundance to them that lack; though the test of generosity lieth in the being forced to deny oneself in things the want of which must be felt, or the possession greatly desired, in order thereby to relieve the wants of they who need help. Many of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ are sorely pinched; but freely do they give, when there may be only 'a handful of meal left,' to such as are more hungry than themselves."

"And the riches of this poverty are sumless; and no hearts on earth, Master Burdwood, can ever be so closely knit, or sound the wondrous depth and

constancy of which even human love is capable, *like those who have suffered*—who do suffer—I scarce dare think how much. When my turn comes to be weighed in the balance, God grant I may not be 'found wanting.'"

In talk of this kind we duly arrived at our journey's end, where the goodly sight and cordial greeting of our assembled brethren amazingly refreshed and cheered us. Some had come from the furthest parts of the county to be present; and conspicuous among them all was the stately, graceful figure and comely face of Master John Howe, whose person doth seem a meet dwelling-place for the soul that inhabiteth it. He being on a short sojourn with friends at his old place of Torrington, thought fit to join us; and no sooner did his dark, clear, piercing eye perceive me, than, making to where I was, he welcomed me with an affection that made my heart leap; for I lived in close friendship with his dear departed father-in-law—excellent Master Hughes. And here I will observe, when Master Howe arose to speak, which he did more than once, on certain subjects propounded by the elder of the ministers, these topics were handled and treated by him in a manner so able and masterful, a power of reasoning so acute and nervous, but subordinate to, and kept in bounds by, a spirit so gracious, mild, and catholic, that those he gravelled in argument were in nowise hurt or offended—for he sought to con-

vince, not triumph, by an eloquence withal neither imitable nor attainable by any amount of brain-work: it resembled the unconscious, majestic flow of some glad, mighty river, proceeding from a source which is exhaustless. Master Howe may have his equal, yet 'twould, methinks, be difficult, either in natural gifts, acquired furniture, or *practical* piety (which I hold to be the marrow of true godliness of life), to find his superior.

Beside him sate Master Lewis Stucley, who might, had he so willed, have attained to great worldly honour and preferment—the Duke of Albemarle being his kinsman; but he chose something nobler than peers or princes can bestow, namely, a free, untrammelled conscience. One of his high ancestors, in time past, was the valiant standard-bearer of an English monarch; Master Stucley likewise beareth bravely the banner of "Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier,"—yea, who is "the Prince of the kings of the earth."

I took notice also of a young gentleman present I had never met before, the sweet composure and fine gravity of whose aspect greatly pleased me. An air of mingled modesty and wisdom presaged parts of no common order. The careless adjustment of his cloak and band, the exceeding plainness of his garb, tokened well for indifference to youthful vanities of outward adornment. When *asked* for an opinion, he gave it, not before; and with

a very graceful, becoming diffidence, speaking pertinently and briefly, but in so incomparably engaging a manner that I longed to hear him at greater length. I perceived the elder ministers regarded this Master John Hamner somewhat as Paul did Timothy, whom he called his "own son in the faith." Master Howe, smiling pleasantly, cast an approving eye of love upon his youthful brother.

I had a talk aside with Master Flavel, likewise Master Quicke, sometime vicar of Kingsbridge, who hath been to prison once, and is ready to go again, if his persecutors see fit to send him; for he scrupleth not declaring, he "must obey God rather than man." "I had scarce a gold piece left, Master Hicks," he observed, "when they clapped me up in gaol, and I could ill bear the selling of my books, for ye know to a scholar they are treasures he can hardly tell how to part company with." (Master Quicke hath all his life been a very searching, painful student; his common wont is to rise with the sun, the more closely to apply himself to his learning.) "But the Lord made rich amends to me: my heart was full of heavenly joy and comfort, and my spirit fresh and vigorous, all the while I lay in my stone cage." By nature he hath a certain warmth of disposition, which sometimes makes him weep over little hastinesses that have hurt none save himself. As a preacher, zealous, fervent, and counted of most uncommon

liveliness, which in Kingsbridge Church Master Quicke found full need for. With little to give, yet hath he such tender bowels to poor souls in distress, that in the hearts of Kingsbridge folk, the good deeds of this pious vicar are better recorded than ever a brass in the chancel can do it hereafter.

Master Flavel is a person of most gracious conditions; he forgiveth injuries and indignities done to himself, as if his chiefest delight on earth was to "overcome evil with good;" ever ready to think and speak charitably of others; and his pen is so fruitful and ingenious, that it may truly be called "the pen of a ready writer." I doubt not his writings will tend to keep his name fragrant as long as there shall be good books printed, or folk inclined to read 'em. Master Flavel told me that now he findeth it convenient, for sake of secrecy, to preach at *midnight*, in the house of a certain honourable family, who show him favour; and that when even at that mirk season their vast and gloomy hall is thronged with eager listeners, and the flame of the torches falleth strongly upon so many attentive, often tearful faces—this sight, working upon his peculiar frame of mind, hath given him a new thought (and with him thought is a seed which begetteth choice similes; he knoweth how to clothe in fitting words), he meekly trusted a divine unction, made precious to the souls of his hearers, of that city which the glory of God maketh bright

perpetually, for "the Lamb is the light thereof," and where "there shall be *no night*."

In this assemblage of ours there were ancient ministers, true fathers in the church on earth, men who had fought without flinching in the battle of spiritual warfare which raged so fiercely in their youth; and some will carry its cruel scars, from the knife and the branding-iron, to their graves—men, whom their bitterest foes acknowledged masters of human, as we did of divine, learning; and they now, in their grey hairs, as with one voice, exhorted all around them to "hold fast the profession of faith, steadfast and unwavering, for His sake who hath promised that "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

At eventide I was constrained to bid these, my dear brethren and fellow-labourers in the Lord, farewell—Master Burdwood, by reason of having business in the next town, whither he purposed proceeding on the morrow, remained behind. So, with a heart revived and comforted, and a mind girded up and strengthened—for Solomon saith truly, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"—I set my face homeward. Though I walked with all diligence, the night was at its deepest ere I neared Kingsbridge, and the great fair moon had climbed the silent heavens. Foremost among the stars I beheld Venus, shining with a lustre that did seem to separate, even

while making her the loveliest of them all. "She, too," mused I, "must fall from yon bright sphere and cease *to be*, when the spirit now informing this frail clay of mine, which can but dimly comprehend either the glory or the purpose of her march with time, shall remain indestructible—yea, eternal as Him who made those heavenly lights, 'the works of His fingers,' and appointed them their places and their seasons. Compared with a reflection like this, how mean and little seemeth all that man holdeth sway or exerciseth dominion over—the life which now is with that which is to come! I marvel not that Job delighted in the fair science of astronomy, as his description of 'the sweet influence of the Pleiades,' and the 'bands of Orion,' very clearly proveth; nor that the Chaldeans, from their lofty towers on the plains of Shinar, loved so to watch—till the watch became a worship—those most glorious luminaries." Here my reverie was sharply broken by a voice I thought I knew, crying, "Hist, master, hist!" and the next moment good Crispin Colling's eldest son swung himself nimbly down from the bough of a tree, on which he had been perched, awaiting for my appearance on the road. By the light of the moon I could see his face, and perceived he was the messenger of bad news.

"Hath aught evil," exclaimed I, "befallen my wife or children?"

"Squire Reynells," replied he, "and his men have broken into your house."

"My family have not been ill-treated?"

"Oh, Mistress Hicks, father said—and he was on the stairs till they knocked him down—bore it bravely; yet I saw her cheeks turn white as those of a corpse, when, after calling her names, they began——"

The lad checked himself.

"Go on; let me know all. Keep nothing secret."

"Sir," answered he, hesitating, and growing very confused, "Mistress Hicks gave them never a word, till they began to cry you down, in so shocking a manner, that, clasping her hands tightly together, she said, loud enough for us in the street to hear every word, 'Revile me, who am a poor, weak woman, if ye like; but my husband—ah, cowards, abuse him not in presence of his wife!'"

"The true heart! Prithee, child, tell me their pretext for offering this violence."

"Why, Sir, Squire Reynells had scent of a preaching. Though he found his mistake, they threw some of your things out at the window."

"Did this haughty man thus molest my poor household? Surely the neighbours——"

"Were 'most afraid to look at the Squire, for he's a terrible gentleman. Some of the boldest did venture faintly cry 'Shame!' when his back was

turned; but they were glad to slink. Mistress Hicks charged me herself to try meet you, and tell what had been done, for she greatly feared your coming home before Squire Reynells, with his men, were clean gone from the town. As they left the house, Sir, I spied Master Arthur Reynells pluck a book out of his pocket, and eyeing sourly two or three folk nearest the porch—Master Best was one—begin to write something, when the Squire clapped him on the shoulder, and they rode away laughing together."

"Humph!" thought I, "then there will soon, I fear, be after-mischief brewing."

Chapter III.

Barred Doors.

THE church clock chimed one as I entered the town, where all was buried in profound repose and quiet. At the back of my house a little window overlooks the garden path—the same by which we had left in the morning; from this window streamed the ray of a lamp, trimmed by a careful watcher. Though I trod softly, my footsteps were heard, the casement flew open, a face peered out, then instantly disappeared; the bolt of the door was hurriedly drawn, and, with a trembling kind of joyfulness, my wife admitted me. Her first question was, had I seen her messenger, Crispin Collings?

"Ay, heard him also; and if we can no longer count on escaping insults and annoyance, like those you have been subject to this past day, take heart:

by God's help, depend on't, we shall be brought through or supported under them."

"But," said my wife, after concluding her account of Squire Reynells' visitation, in which she passed over, or very slightly mentioned—wincing while doing so, as if it gave her pain barely to think upon—the scurril language of my defamers touching myself, and dropt not a word about her own good and commendable conduct during the attack,—"I marked those rude, boisterous persons. The justice and his men seemed greatly chagrined, notwithstanding the terror and confusion they surprised *us* into." Meaning some neighbours, decent, and very civil bodies, who, while she was sitting busy at her spinning-wheel, had just put their harmless noses within the porch to bid her good-day, when Squire Reynells and his attendants burst like a storm upon and scattered them. "They surely can do no more mischief," quoth she, casting a rueful glance around her.

"Ah," thought I, "may it be so ordered! And, doubtless, this magistrate and his followers were chagrined at not seizing me as they desired, in the midst of what their profanity calleth a conventicle. Still, Arthur Reynells' jotting down the name of certain a-lingering outside to my mind wears an ugly look; for to men like he, truth and justice in sooth are as empty sounds. 'Tis plain, that *I* myself am the mark these scornful archers seek to

hit; but fear of such shall never hinder me from either preaching abroad, or speaking in private, when or wherever I can find place and fitting season for so doing. John Lucas, ere they stop me, must first put his gagging-iron in my mouth. 'Twill cut me to the quick, wife," observed I, "to see our good Crispin or honest Guy, and others we love, mulcted in fines they cannot pay, and in default of payment wantonly punished; I would far rather suffer in my own person."

"That," replied she, "is you all over, and minds me of a picture I once beheld, where the limner showed a hero binding up his friend's wounds, while regardless of the bleeding of his own."

"Nay, that is far too high and romantical a conceit. I would have you read"—trying to frown—"a plain man of not unkindly nature like your husband more soberly; but, as I was saying, if any wrong is done these worthy folk, I shall grieve sorely, though what can my sympathy avail them? Alack, I am powerless and *very poor*."

As I spoke the last words, the light I had taken in my hand shone softly upon the faces of two of my children, sound asleep upon a pallet in the corner of our chamber. Stooping down for a moment, I contemplated the blooming features of my pretty boys: both their heads lay on the same pillow, and the eldest—who his mother told me showed signs of a sturdy spirit during the uproar,

while the next in age was almost frighted into fits—had his arm thrown with a child-protecting air about this weaker brother's neck. The careless grace of sleep had mixed their curly locks together; those shining rings which I love well to twist and twine around my finger. How could I say I was poor? God pardon me the hasty speech! Why, there in that room were treasures of His giving, for which the jewels of a monarch's crown would prove a worthless exchange.

Being heartily tired, I soon fell into a heavy slumber, from which I did not waken till broad day; and then the first thing my eye lighted on was our carved oaken press, from which the doors had barbarously been torn away. Its contents, mostly linen of her own spinning, my wife told me—beside a portion of our well-saved raiment, fast growing frail and thread-bare — had been coarsely handled by our late rude disturbers, the dirty traces of whose boots were visible all over the house. Yet that which vexed and disturbed me more than having hat and wig thrown out of window was, to find how cruelly my books had been moiled and ransacked—worse than all; not only the brown ancient covers of some rent and defaced, but the contents of a full ink-horn emptied in malice over the pages of others, which had descended to me from my learned ancestors; likewise a manuscript that cost me much toil, though the toil grew to be

a delight—namely, my treatise upon "The Heavenly Substance,"—Squire Reynells no sooner espied lying on the writing-table, than, like a hawk pouncing on its prey, straight he snatched the papers up, and, finding what they were, tore them fiercely and then essayed to cast the discourse in the fire, from whence my good wife boldly snatched, and, scorched though it was, smothered it in her apron, he swearing savagely, her husband might be made find his goose-quill could be turned into a rod, and a pretty sharp one, for his own back.

"The contemptuous behaviour of this churl, dear wife," cried I, taking the blurred, disfigured manuscript, "stirreth my anger barely to think upon."

"Then do *not* think upon it," said she, pensively. "Anger never mended a mischief, whereas love healeth many."

"Right, and thou art a good remembrancer. I have need pray for grace to subdue this choleric passion. Oh, while preaching and writing sermons for other folk, may the Lord enable me to show that my own godly, humble life is the truest application of them, seeing 'faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.'"

Left to myself, I began more coolly to reflect on the forcible entry of this magistrate—proceeding from a mere groundless suspicion—into our pre-

mises, and under present circumstances, my inability to prevent the recurrence of a like, or perhaps worse violence, should he be disposed to offer it. An idea then gradually presented itself to my mind, concerning which, all I shall here say is, the more I pondered upon, the more prudent and feasible did the measure appear. Now those rare books of mine, mused I, regarding ruefully the one in my hand, a quarto of goodly bulk, whose leathern sides and brazen clasps had been sorely damaged. Its title-page was once adorned with a portrait of Augustine; on this grave and noble countenance, while a child at my mother's knee, well had I loved to gaze, as in turn did my little sons at mine. The fair admirable features were fouled, and smirched, and made grim to blackness in very wantonness of mischief by the barbarous spoiler. With profane touch had he sullied leaves where I have found mute yet eloquent companionship with souls a "little lower than the angels." These golden moments, if fled, are not wasted, I trow. I must bring the plan—the best my brain can devise—to preserve such as remain undamaged being served in like manner, if forced by a pang to attest the truth of Master Quick's observe when obliged to sell his. Again, this check was doubtless needed; I may have been too prone to sip the stream of other men's wisdom and experience, when I should have drunk deeply from the divine fountain of

heavenly living water, which supplied that stream; been more earnest and diligent in searching the oracles of God for myself, the Scriptures given by His inspiration, for the use, teaching, warning, and consolation of those who lay hold upon eternal life. Is there a book for the time of trouble, the time of self-probation, the time of sickness, the time of health, or youth, or joy, yea, till time itself be merged into eternity, a learned doctor, or a child of tender years, can learn from, lean upon, cling to, rejoice over, be comforted with, as with the Bible? In retaining this one, loss of all others will be made up.

But I have made digression from what I was about to write, which is: The governors of public affairs, and framers of our laws, do not merely give countenance, they openly lavish favours and preferments on men—I cannot prefix the ancient, courteous title of *gentleman* to their names—of Squire Reynells' and Master Beare's complexion. When we appeal for redress of our grievances to those in power, it seemeth to have the effect of increasing, instead of lessening, the evils we groan under. They in high places seek to tread us down, for nought save cleaving firmly to the tenets of the faith our righteous fathers held, and saints and martyrs before them, who glorified God "in the fires." The liberties they many of whom died for, it becometh us never to slacken our efforts in

striving to possess. The Lord will help, and deliver His people from their oppressors. Till then, let us betake ourselves to a refuge, from which Satan may not drive, nor hell affright, nor all the powers of earth combined debar us. That refuge is PRAYER. Let us "pray without ceasing," and grace will be given us "to do well, and suffer for it, taking it patiently."

I had written thus far when a confused hum of voices, followed by a faint scream, and the sharp sliding of bolts, made me throw away my pen; and now, after considerable lapse of time, I hastily take it up again, to make minute of the cause of this interruption.

'Twas close upon the hour of noon, when I was startled at sounds in our porch like strokes dealt with a hearty will from a bar, or cudgel. In a moment my wife rushed into the room where I was sitting, and her lips all white, and trembling, cried out, "I've barred the doors, for John Lucas and his man are below." She then passionately implored me not to wax too bold. "Make your mind easy on that score," said I; "but there is one thing I straitly enjoin—stay here with the children," who, poor things, were holding by her skirts, and beginning to wail. Then running nimbly up the stair, I suddenly opened a window in front of my house, and spied two men belabouring my door, might and main, with their staves. As may be

supposed, the noise they made had brought a number of folk together, and others were running as fast as their legs could carry them.

No sooner did the tallest of these men catch sight of me steadily regarding him, than he bade his comrade desist, and the horrid din being stopped, shouted forth, "Master Hicks, in the King's name I command that you unbar your door to give us entrance," and producing a warrant, just signed by the hand of Squire Reynells, read it aloud; whereby I learnt, in accordance with the late enactments and statutes framed for the suppression of conventicles, and the chastisement of *supposed* holders and abettors thereof, this implacable magistrate had levied a fine of twenty pounds upon me. To say nought of its spirit, I concluded the letter of the warrant was illegal, therefore firmly refused the constable admission. Hearing which resolve, he—an exceeding gaunt, lean, hard-featured man—looked up at me as I stood in the window, with a pair of eyes so ravenous in their regards, that though I never saw a wolf but once in my life, the sight of his ill-favoured visage brought the beast quite fresh to my remembrance; and folk say the inward temper of this man is harsh and cruel as his outward person would seem to indicate. Still glaring at me, and holding the writ high as a remarkably long arm could reach, that all might see it, he exclaimed fiercely, "If ye still persist in

keeping us without, your door shall instantly be broke open, and distress taken upon your chattels."

Here I felt my coat-skirt gently pulled, and a deep sob told me my wife was close behind. Turning round, with as severe a countenance as I could possibly put on, she retreated to the stair-head, but near enough to hear all that passed.

"John Lucas," replied I, "it is both right and lawful to render unto Cæsar——"

"None of your cant," roared he, "I know nought about Cæsar. Come down and unbar the door, or we'll soon make ye," and he and his comrade banged at it so violently, the floor shook whereon I was standing.

I, making earnest gesture to those gathered in the street, called at the top of my voice, "Let me, for one minute's space, I entreat ye, be heard."

"Hold, John Lucas, hold your noise. We will hear what Master Hicks has got to say," and straightway some lusty young 'prentice fellows began to press the constables, bawling, "Fair play's a jewel;" and one, pointing meaningly to me, cried, "If he's to be baited and worried after this fashion for what he has not done, who'll be safe"—tapping the two men on the high crowns of their hats—"*your* worshipful master sees fit to lay his hands upon?"

A strong feeling of indignation was now fast rising against my persecutors, and a brawny smith,

with thews like a giant's, seizing the lesser one, declared Nix Ford should be taught keep the peace himself, while the crowd grew mightily tickled to see the man kicking, spluttering, and vowing all manner of reprisal, in the King's name, Squire Reynells's, and I wot not whose beside. They then began hem in John Lucas, who stood motionless within the porch. I could not see his face, but a dark shadow, falling grimly athwart the sunshine on my threshold, told me where he was. The disturbance outside not seeming to lessen, I, fearing a mischief might ensue, put my head out of window, and entreated the folk to let the men alone, whereupon they desisted, and I seized the opportunity to speak a few words somewhat to this effect :—That duty to God first, and man next, I humbly strove by grace to make the leading rule and action of my life. I knew myself to have as true and loyal a heart and nature as any of those a-listening to me—yea, in a just cause, I would cheerfully make any temporal sacrifice required for the honour of the Crown. But the liberty I craved, freedom to worship Him who is "the King of kings," I trusted earthly suffering or punishment might never daunt me from. "It is," said I, warming with the subject as I went on, "a sacred birthright, which man, be he never so highly exalted by circumstance, has no right to withhold, or alienate from his fellow-man."

Here some below cried, "Master Hicks, 'twere better you should keep a still tongue." And, I grieve to add, my poor wife not a little vexed me by her sighs and tears, after the foolish manner of women when affrighted. But let me do this fond heart justice. What made her quail in this exceeding craven manner, now I was present in person, was the terror which possessed her soul, that I should so commit myself, as to get dragged away to gaol, by they who greatly desired to show me this civility? And John Lucas, stepping from under the porch, full into view, folded his arms, and fixing those strange eyes of his upon my face —his wrinkled upper lip at the same time showing his long, sharp teeth in so ugly a manner, that I felt as if some evil thing were about to strike its fangs in me—said, gruffly, "Go on, prating rebel, *I* bid ye not stop."

"By witnesses of good credit," was my reply, glancing, after a troubled pause, at his knitted, grizzled brows, "I can prove this warrant you are come to serve, is issued on a pretext, false and groundless as paltry and shameless. In this case, surely the law has neither been broken nor evaded by me or my friends; if you still persist, for no harm that I have done, trying to force your way inside the house to waste, spoil, and turn us out destitute, though I am not strong enow to resist, never, of my own accord, will I consent unbar these

doors to admit men for so evil and cruel a purpose."

Either the peaceable, inoffensive carriage of myself and family had won us more affection and sympathy than I before had knowledge of, or else that innate love of truth and justice, which, though it may be awhile kept down, is sure, at last, to kindle, and break forth with all the more power in true English hearts, or perhaps both together—I cannot tell; but all the townsfolk gathered around —save some of the timider sort, who had prudently retreated, like conies to their burrows—declared they never would stand quietly by and see poor Master Hicks and his wife and children so maltreated; and the smith lifted up an arm, whose iron strength few mortals of common build might dare risk contact with in strife. John Lucas, perceiving the turn matters had taken, and that no entrance by him into my house could then be effected, turned sullenly away, not, however, without, in a baffled rage, clenching his bony fist, and again regarding me, as I have before described—while he hissed, rather than spoke, these words: "Master Parson, 'fore long we'll be closer acquainted."

Chapter IV.

A Beare—Minor Sacrifices resolved upon and made—The Result of Master Arthur Reynells' Memorandum.

METHINKS an English yeoman, descended from generations of the like condition before him, in prime of life, robust in health, with a plentifully-stocked estate, and large convenient house, sheltered by trees of his forefathers' planting, seated in the midst of fields and meadows, which do not only feed, clothe, employ himself and household, but likewise recreate them with pure, sweet, wholesome air, and all manner of pleasant, cheerful, rustical sights and sounds—his land paying him back a rare usury in golden harvests for the seed sown amid its fructuous furrows—surely a lot of this kind I have been describing, may be counted among the most favoured and delightsome—the most peaceful, as well as useful, if the receiver thereof possess a

gracious heart and quiet nature—of any the Lord bestoweth upon the sons of men. Just such a goodly possession, as far as temporal blessings are concerned, hath by natural heritance fallen to Master Beare—of all our persecutors the most dangerous—whose extraordinary active forwardness, in thus distressing and worrying us, would be unexplainable by reason, were it not pretty well known he greatly craveth the dignity of being made a magistrate; and to a certain party in power, who can grant him this preferment, nought appearing more acceptable than our punishment, he hath keener edge for a pursuit of which folk say the reward is assured.

Master Beare liveth upon his estate, in a flux of pride and wasteful riot, being foremost in all bouts of fighting, dicing, wassail, and other carnal diversions. At the barbarous town baitings, his fierce dogs, set on by their fiercer master, are ever the first to gore, and the last to hang upon, the chained and bellowing bull. Yet these horrid evil pastimes he delighteth in rarely hinder Master Beare from showing himself and his great white periwig, fine laced coat, and doublet all a-blaze with gold and scarlet, duly at church, where he sayeth the responses in a voice louder than the parish clerk's, or liker, may be, to the olden Pharisees', a "whited sepulchre" to outward view, but within "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

I had so narrow an escape myself, a couple of days agone, from falling bodily into his clutches, that I now make somewhat careful entry concerning the occasion which very nearly led to it, the particulars whereof have since been told me by they who were witnesses of the whole affray.

A good distance out of Kingsbridge lieth a piece of waste, unfenced common, high enough for those of our people set to watch—when we meet there for worship—to give timely alarm if a suspicious party be seen approaching. Last Tuesday the brethren, understanding either Master Tooker or myself designed to preach there, were assembling themselves in expectation of our arrival. But God's interposing mercy had decreed otherwise. Before I gat half way thither, two of the friends, knowing the secret, rarely-trodden path by which I was coming, met, and in so wild an alarm besought me to flee for safety, that I yielded to their importunity, and was thus again delivered from the snare of the wicked ones who seek my ruin.

Master Beare, in conjunction with John Lucas, had laid a plan to surround us—having a muster of near a score followers for the purpose—and seize upon me in *the act* of preaching. Then Lucas, who hath been heard swear he hateth doing things of this sort by halves, felt confident the threat so lately uttered by him, when baffled at my own door, could be fully carried into effect, for he

greedily longeth to hale me to prison; and, by keeping concealed a little longer, this object must have been gained and I taken in the manner my enemies wished to take me; but the fierce impatience of Master Beare was permitted to forestal and defeat his cruel purpose. He rode over the ground where our meetings are sometimes holden, mounted upon his fiery horse—a brute few like to come near, though he sitteth him in a way that mindeth one of the heathen fable of the Centaur, the man seeming, truly, part of the beast, but the beast by no means adorned by the burly human figure planted upon its back—riding at full speed after they who fled like timid sheep from before him; for such a man and horse are—it is a mercy—seldom to be met. He thunderingly demanded if Master Hicks had been among them; hearing this they mustered courage to halt, and with some spirit declared, "I had *not*, neither had they seen me near the spot," which was strictly true. John Lucas, on a sorry hack, and looking mighty chop-fallen, next rode up. Master Beare, bending down, whispered him a moment, and then, wheeling round, galloped furiously after some poor frighted gentlewomen, cumbered by their heavy riding gear, whom he espied in the distance, dashing into their midst, and bespattering them with mud, even to their hoods. In a fit of tempestuous merriment at their distraction, with hand of iron he reined up his

horse, which pawed the ground, and champed the bit till its skin was flecked with foam, showing like snow-flakes on the blackness of a carcase where not a white hair is to be found. Mad, ungodly Master Beare, whose red face when in a passion——and he is rarely ever out of one—turneth almost of a purple hue, now ceasing his hideous laughter, began to rate these modest gentlewomen in language so unseemly, that it made their ears tingle, and cheeks burn with shame and anger, all ready, as they were, to sink into the earth before him from excess of fear. Meanwhile, John Lucas laid hold of a slender stripling, who had previously been cuffed and beaten by others of this evil company, because they conceited him one of those set to give warning of the approach of foes to the poor flock thus rudely scattered.

"Ho! ho! young psalm-singer," said Lucas, in his deep, grating voice, "thou shalt not slip through my fingers like an eel. I'll have two crown pieces paid on the instant,"—a mean attempt at jesting on the part of the constable, who knew the lad was scarce like to be owner of two brass farthings,—"or give thee a taste of my staff I'll warrant thou'lt not forget in a hurry."

"Is it money you want?" cried Robin Cheke, putting his hands in his pockets, though forlornly conscious there was nothing in either of them.

"What dost hold parley with that rogue for?" shouted Master Beare, again coming up to Lucas. "Leave him for *me* to settle." And striking spurs in his horse, made a bound towards the poor youth, but the creature he bestrode, whether of more generous nature than its master, or disliking the spur, suddenly recoiled on its haunches, nearly flinging him out of the saddle.

However, Master Beare quickly recovered his seat, and bade Lucas recapture Robin, who in deadly fright had broken away, and gotten for shelter behind a clump of stunted pollards, to avoid the being trampled under the hoofs of the plunging horse. The constable did so; and as he is a man of large sinewy frame, poor Robin Cheke was cudgelled in such cruel manner, especially about the head and shoulders, that if his beaver, strangely enow, had not cleaved pretty close to his pate, a cracked skull would most like have been the consequence. Other of Master Beare's men, overtaking more defenceless flying folk, drew their rapiers, and threatened to run them through if ever they were caught there again.

This shows what a pass things are coming to, and I grieve to observe, this most violent dispersal of the Lord's people by fearful menace and hard blows hath struck a chill of terror into the souls of some who loved well to warm themselves in the

sunshine of religion, but are not steeled with courage to meet the storm of troubles gathering about the strait and narrow path they profess to choose. Truly these are sifting times; the wheat must soon be separate from the chaff, and not a few we counted stable will perhaps veer with the wind and turn with the tide. I pray fervently those dear feeble-minded folk I have just made allusion to, as showing tokens of dismay and faltering, may, through saving grace, yet prove by experience that "the weakness of God is stronger than men."

I was about to shut up my note-book. Yet is there another entry, of character altogether homely and domestical (to a degree that some folk might think savours of puerility), I incline, though of such simple, small account, to jot down. But as moments make up the sum of time, and drops of water the ocean, so is our daily life chiefly composed of and influenced by things too minute and insignificant for any chronicler to record, or any eye to note, save His, without whose knowledge even a little mean bird, like yon sparrow, twittering on the eaves which overhang my window, may not fall to the ground unnoticed. I made mention a while back, that as I was sitting alone in my disordered chamber, the morning after Squire Reynells sacked my house, a certain thought came into my mind I had then neither time, nor inclination,

to dilate upon, though now I can do so in a way that filleth me with thankfulness, and *this* was the motion I thus soliloquized at the time alluded to:—

'Twould surely be a prudent measure in us to dispose, as quickly as may be, of whatever superfluities we possess in our stock of household stuff (those relics of the time when I was a prosperous vicar), and, till quieter days return, keep nought save what is barely required for our own and children's wants. By so doing we shall avoid running risk of the mortification of again seeing our goods defaced and spoiled, besides raising a sum like to prove of good service, now I am cut off from my chief resource of earning a guinea; for before the cruel Five Mile Act (framed, it would seem, o'purpose for the starving poor ministers) was put in full force, I, having some experience of tuition during my university life, was glad, when not other ways engaged, to instruct, for a small fee, the sons of certain of the Kingsbridge folk; and my scholars gathered willingly around me, for I ever strove as schoolmaster to set learning with a serene and gracious, not harsh and crabbed, aspect before their youthful eyes. I also remembered that on some few minds the Almighty in His inscrutable wisdom has bestowed the wondrous power of gaining knowledge almost by intuition, of comprehending the subtle mysteries of science, or profounder secrets of

nature, rather with the glance of a spiritual intelligence unfettered by corporeal matter, than the capacity of a mortal—these are the possessors of the glorious but awful gift of the "talents" *complete*. Being 'ware of my propensity to hold great and shining natural parts in a too fond admiration, I did pray (if any such might come under my teaching) for all the more patience, skill, and gentleness, to take encouragingly by the hand the weaker, duller, those to whom only "one" had been vouchsafed (who, to speak comparatively, found it a hard tug to con aright the letters in a horn-book), and lead them on, as best they were able to bear it. None of my scholars, even the frowardly inclined, but, I'll make bold to say, grew to respect and love me; and of all feelings the sweetest is, to feel oneself beloved. How perfect is the description of Him by whom, through whom, and for whom all things were created, though told in only three short words, "God is love;" and in not many more we have the distinguishing feature of His favoured disciple: "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." These divine sentences flowed from an inspired pen—yea, his who in the flesh leaned upon the breast of the Redeemer of mankind.

I would also observe that in making all needful efforts toward the support of our family, my wife was never a whit behind me. Reckoned right excellent at her needle, what once she practised

for pleasure she ofttimes did now for profit. Certain gentlewomen, finding her to be a most dainty and nimble broidress, gave her plenty of this work to do; and before I could guess her purpose, she had filled a little purse and put it in my hand with a gladness of spirit that brought a tear to my eye; yet afterwards I could scarce forbear a smile, when I have seen her regarding her rainbow silks, intent as a bee upon a knot of garden flowers. In truth she ever mindeth me (in the doing one household duty after another) of a bee going busily from flower to flower, and making honey for the little hive at home.

Now this matter I was meditating secretly in my own mind, touching the disposal of the best portion of our worldly goods, I likewise fully resolved not think of carrying into effect without her entire and cheerful approval. My wife's quiet submission to my will, thought I, in a matter of this sort, will not suffice; she must either heartily commend the measure, or I will abandon it altogether. For a household sacrifice of the sort I mused upon affecteth gentlewomen more closely than it doth their husbands. The simple wants of a scholarly, and somewhat careless man, may be almost comprised in a trencher to eat from and a stool to sit upon. But *they* regard these things in a very different light. Many a time hath my wife broke an innocent jest with me, by declaring—

which was true enow—that I scarce could discern the difference between a pewter dish or one of costly porcelain, a silver charger or a wooden bowl; but there is little like of *her* making a mistake of this sort; and most of those articles I was going to avise with her about the disposal of, she prized as relics of her happy girlhood in her father's house, or, dearer still, our early wedded life. After some further cogitation I at length gently unfolded my plan; as I rather reluctantly proceeded (for the task proved harder than I thought) her face, at first slightly overcast, assumed a look of thoughtful attention, which gradually melted into a smile of sweet and ready approval. Her good sense clearly discerned its prudence, and my motion produced the happiest effect, till I went on to say that the books, with sundry other matters she well knew how high a value I had once set upon, should be the first things to go.

Then, with a pertinacity which nearly angered me, she persisted in repeating, "I had much rather sell my hood and kirtle than have your books disposed of; just think how puzzled and at a loss you will find yourself. Indeed," continued she, waxing eloquent, "I can't conceive, dear husband, how you could possibly manage to get on without 'em."

"That is a mistake," said I, a little nettled; "I trust my intellectuals are as yet sufficiently clear to enable me to find out, as well as defend the

truth; and to discern the costly treasures laid up in the great storehouse of God's Holy Word, without everlastingly holding the candle of another man's learning in my hand for the purpose."

To cut this cavil short, it was not before I declared resolutely that unless *my* part of this household sacrifice was made as fully as I could do so, our chattels and moveables must remain as they were till the next inbreak from our enemies, that she accorded her consent cordially, and thus 'twas settled. The sending the bellman round, according to custom, being unpracticable for persons in our situation, we found friendly folk, who, heartily approving our wise resolve, kindly did their best toward the carrying out our purpose, by taking goods we could no longer count on preserving in safety, at what I greatly feared was too high a price—they named it themselves—for I know "blessings are upon the head of the just," and "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" is a divine command; and be that matter never so little, a lively tender conscience will not fail to remember it.

Yet there was a memory of the past associated with some few of those familiar things which centred strongest on two of the most brittle, and therefore, of course, the most unfit for *us* to keep, that cost me half a sigh of vain regret, when I saw them taken away, though by kind and loving

hands. The one was the Venice mirror, in cunningly-wrought frame, which had reflected my wife's fair face at the period I, with a youthful bachelor's conceit, was wont to think the bravest red rose might not match her blushing cheek if she espied *me* near, and other eyes had likewise gazed complacently enow upon its polished surface to make me smile. Yet only marvel how vanity could be so much more enduring a thing than beauty with some female gentlefolk; for a true mirror telleth no flattering lies; but is, I take it, a valuable remembrancer of the change time surely maketh, if our weak eyes are not holden to perceive what every other pair can for us. The next was my large hour-glass, which Master Hawes, a bachelor, was greatly minded to have, and hath purchased in a sum so handsome I was fain refuse it, but he overruled my objections; and may this glass—seeing he is near forty—prove to him an awakening remembrancer of the exceeding fleetness, as well as preciousness of time. 'Twas a gift to me from an aged Brownist kinsman, on occasion of my preaching my first sermon, though I never used it in the pulpit, as some more learned elder brethren do theirs, whose discourses being divided into a goodly number of heads, each head with its enlargements and particulars well and closely studied, they can for three hours and upwards pursue their subject without flagging. Now I inclined to more

brevity, preferring to condense that which the Holy Spirit instructed me to deliver, and impart it to my hearers in as clear, simple, yet forcible a manner as I could, avoiding the shooting over their heads with high and flighty tropes, as much as I strove to reach their hearts by simplicity of speech, affection, and true soundness of doctrine. Therefore this tall hour-glass of mine was not of the service the worthy giver designed, for I never turned it more than *once*. And this practice—which our younger brothers and sisters did dare venture approve, almost to open admiration, for the latter came like doves to their windows when 'twas known I was a-going to preach—of necessity made my sermons, as I have before hinted, much shorter than those of many reverend ministers at whose feet I have been thankful to sit, filled with humility at the contrast my scanty, imperfect attainments presented, when compared with the depth and the greatness of theirs.

Just as I had finished counting over the money paid me from the sale of our superfluities, my wife said, smiling, "This little heap of broad pieces is like to prove of very good service to us. Right glad am I to think, if Squire Reynells again break in, there will be little save bare walls for him to spoil and waste."

"True; and better still, we need neither lock nor key for our treasure. The gold your needle

and thread has sewn up safe enow in the lining of my doublet; and this," handing her a small leathern bag of silver, "you know pretty much better than I do how to manage discreetly."

The words were scarce out of my mouth, when a neighbour came running in hastily to tell me that writs were served on certain persons, who had been noted by a gentleman (Master Arthur Reynells) as supposed to have been taking part in a conventicle, on the day Squire Reynells broke into my house, in hope of finding me there.

"And they will, doubtless, be fined, on the evidence of those first basely tutored, and then suborned for the purpose," exclaimed I.

"Ay, marry, they will; for Master Cole, demurring payment, they have driven away his flock of sheep; I passed the poor, harmless, bleating things on the road, as I came hither. Methought John Lucas made the grimmest shepherd that ever was seen."

"He would make a fitter butcher," was my inward reflection.

"And Crispin Collings, with one or more beside," continued our informant, "are mulcted in forty shillings a-piece, which they, being poor as coots already, will never be able to pay."

As soon as my wife and I were left alone, I said, "There is but one way in which I can help these dear souls in their trouble," and I laid my hand upon my doublet.

She understood my meaning. I saw her give an anxious glance toward the children.

"Fear not," cried I; "we serve Him who will never let the righteous be forsaken, nor suffer his seed to beg their bread."

She answered by pulling out the little bag of silver I had given into her keeping. "Dear husband, would I had thy faith! Let us divide our all with them."

"Truly," quoth I to myself, "'a good wife is a gift from the Lord,' and (blessed words) 'his heart doth *safely trust* in her.'"

So, without loss of an hour, I privately sought Master Hawes, and he arranged to settle matters in such a manner that our poor friends—though every farthing was exacted of the hateful fine levied upon them, for their goods were publicly sold—by means of my advance, and some help from other quarters, were able to remain in their own houses. Master Cole, being a man of a little substance, likewise paid his fine, and gat back most, but not all, of his sheep; and when he tried to gain account of the missing, received so sharp a hint "that 'twould be best for him to keep quiet," he hath never since said a word about his loss.

Neither am I deceived by the present treacherous calm shown towards myself by those who so lately sought to lay hands upon me. I know that this seeming quiet on their part is only a feint to blind

and mislead—of this I have received private warning from a watchful friend—the more completely to entrap me hereafter. Yet I, remembering how godly men of old "through faith stopped the mouths of lions," feel no fear, having a most comfortable assurance from the Lord that "through weakness" I shall be "made strong." Yea, "He that keepeth me will not slumber."

Chapter V.

"*And there was no more sea.*"

GOOD Master and Mistress Tooker are bereaved by death of their son, in so distressful a manner, that our hearts, as a Christian church—taking Christ for her blessed exemplar, and therefore feeling through all her members a brother or sister's calamity—have sorrowed much for this faithful minister and his wife in their tribulation.

The stroke which, in accordance with the purpose of Him who cannot err, hath fallen thus heavily upon them, is of such pitiful, singular, and affecting nature, that we might well think even a person like Master Beare could scarce prove so ruthless as, out of the heart-pouring before the Lord of these poor stricken souls in their sad "house of mourning" to find successful pretext for tormenting and despoiling them. By my troth,

Beare is a name that suiteth this man. He could be called by no fitlier, seeing he proveth thus true a one in his savage temper and conditions; for, if he did not rampage out to poor Master Tooker's place, in his own alarming person, yet is he, nevertheless, the prime mover of the whole wicked plot; and, alack! needeth not tools, who do his work in a way which showeth they are ready-fashioned to the evil hand of the master, using their pravity for ends so cruel, that my pen—unconscious servant of my will—seems loth to trace the features of the melancholy cause which led to our distressed brother's ill-usage. Briefly they are as follows:—

Mistress Tooker, after several years of barrenness, bore him a son. Now, an only child, though counted by rejoicing parents their most precious, is likewise their most perilous earthly treasure. The boy grew up well-favoured, and towardly enough in all particulars save one: nought would he give his mind to but boats, and ships, and talk of sailor folk; while to become a great sea-captain was his thought by day—yea, he even prattled of it in his sleep; and this wayward inclination of young Tooker's was the more remarkable and noticeable, seeing his infant years had been spent in his father's quiet fields, or under his tender mother's wing, amid her fruit-trees, bees, and flowers, with no piece of water near, or in sight, bigger than a pond; and to *that*, as soon as

he was out of a go-cart, his nature prompted him, where soon, with a wild and boisterous glee, he learned to dive and swim, liker a wag-tail, or screaming curlew, than could be supposed possible for child of such grave, serious father, and gentle, timorous mother. She, poor trembling soul, tried various loving arts and fond entreaties to wile him from a bent which filled her days with anxious bodings; till his father, finding mildness and affection of little avail, handled him more harshly, speaking with authority, and then sternly chastising him with the rod. But nought could hinder or restrain this beloved child of their hopes and prayers from pursuing the inclination of his natural propensity. Therefore, to prevent a worse mischief, Master Tooker gave reluctant consent his son should try one voyage. The brave ship in which the lad sailed had made a hundred before, and returned all safe and prosperous; yet *this* proved her last. A great storm arose; she was wrecked; and he who was so full of health, life, and gladness—few dreamed of death for him; his young, ruddy-cheeked, comely face, and bright, black, mirthful eyes, are before me as I write—now sleeps beneath the waters.

When the doleful tidings that her son was drowned were broke—though never so gently—to Mistress Tooker, they feared she would have gone distraught. The first outburst of feeling spent

itself, and then, like a woman whose soul "refused to be comforted," she sank into a state of deject and silent woe, even still more pitiful to witness. At this juncture, Master Tooker conveyed a message to me: the purport of it was that, if practicable, he greatly desired my presence at Norden —the little hidden corner in the country where their home is. I needed not his message, to seize the earliest opportunity of going to him; but on my road, the house in which Master Jellinger lodgeth being scarce a stone's throw out of the way, I stepped aside, and, as my wont is, knocked softly at the door. Receiving no answer, I lifted the latch; all was quiet, save a blithe cricket chirping in the chimney. Having privilege of entrance, I went up to Master Jellinger's chamber, looked in, and there was he reclining on the bench of the window in the sweetest, tranquillest slumber imaginable. The heat of the weather had made him push back from his temples his black Geneva skull-cap—he misliketh a periwig—and his long locks of a silver whiteness were gently stirred by the summer air, as if by an invisible, caressing hand. The pen had fallen out of his thin, wasted fingers, and beside him lay his papers. I just made bold to see what he was employed upon; sure, nothing less than turning some of his thoughts into a poem, for having pretty many jerks of fancy, our brother, naturally enow, conceiteth himself of a poetic cast

of mind, and loveth to divert his spare moments with this verse-making, of which, in his particular, the sense is better than anything else. Between the leaves of his favourite discourses, "The Rose of Sharon," and "A Cluster of the Sweetest Grapes," he had stuck sprigs of rosemary—the meaning of which I was at no loss to divine, for rosemary is death's own flower, and therefore poor mournful Master Jellinger preferreth it before any other. Regarding him affectionately, I perceived a smile—rare visitor—upon his countenance, and every feature tokening he was in enjoyment of a most calm and pleasant dream. I, judging 'twould be pity to arouse him therefrom, withdrew as cautiously as I had entered.

On going out, I met Mistress Hawes—the ancient widow with whom Master Jellinger lodgeth—a-coming in. This worthy woman hath truly proved herself, in life and conversation, like they Paul commended, as deserving of honour in the church, for she belongeth to the number of "widows that are *widows indeed*," is "well reported of for good works," having "brought up children," "lodged strangers," and "relieved the afflicted." On my telling her how I found matters above stairs with her lodger, she smiled, and said she was glad to hear he was asleep, "for his nights, dear, feeble gentleman, have been sadly broken of late. Sometimes in the middle watches, Master Hicks, I and

my son"—she is mother of Master Hawes the bachelor—"know Master Jellinger to be awake, he is either praying or singing hymns, in so moving a manner, that I can scarce help weeping, for he is numbered with them from whose eyes all tears will soon be wiped."

"His singing of hymns then, good dame, in the night, doth not disturb you?"

"Nay, nay," quoth she; "we feel as if a blessing resteth on our roof-tree ever since this godly minister was sent to lodge with us."

"And doubtless a blessing will rest upon thee and thine," thought I, "for having given the 'cup of cold water' to a disciple that needed it, and showing so 'much kindness' to him who 'cannot requite' thee after the fashion of the rich of this world's children, when they receive and are grateful for a favour; yet shalt thou 'be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'"

As I went down the steep, narrow, bosky lane, that leadeth into Master Tooker's place of Norden, I remembered when in stiller times treading the same grassy path, with the branches meeting overhead, a-thinking what sweet spot 'twas either to begin or end one's days in; and they ought count themselves favoured, who are permitted do both in such a peaceful hermitage. The noon of life I might choose pass in busier scenes; but for the morning dawn, or sober even, when the deepening

shadows say the solemn night is near, where can calmer earthly rest be found?

The farm-house is long and low; there is a great stack of chimneys at one end, and an iron vane, set up with a deal of complacency by poor dear Master Tooker himself, at the other. Divers little windows peer out like eyes upon a garden court, with a row of bee-hives all along the south side, and a dial to see what o'clock 'tis in the middle. A single, rich, brown pear-tree stands in a corner of the goodly orchard. How pleasant seemed this Vale of Norden, as I gazed upon its sunny fields, through which runs a brook of the clearest water, ever, while it goeth on its way, singing the same soft ceaseless tune in the ear of man, and to the greenwood above. It began to sing in that of silence—eldest of all things—more than five thousand summers agone.

As I drew near Master Tooker's dwelling I descried his wife sitting in one of the little windows I had named. A rose-tree spreadeth over half the house; some of the gay roses were dangling about the casement, and two, fair and bright enough for a young bride's garland, almost touching the close white coif of the mourner below. She was so buried in deep sad reverie, that I remained still a few minutes marvelling at the change grief, in such short space of time, had wrought upon the drooping form before me. While thus occupied,

the bells of the nearest village church rang out a peal; the sweet sounds rising, falling, at last floated away, and died in a strain of tender fineness, the very air around did seem charmed into the continuing of—yea, loth to receive into its bosom; and on again regarding Mistress Tooker, I perceived that she, too, was hearkening, for her head was raised, and turned in the direction whence the sweet peal sounded. But, presently, she began to wring her hands, seeing which, I hastened forward.

"Dear sister," said I, after we had affectionately greeted one another, "I pray you tell me what there could be in those bells we have each been just a-listening to that stirred your grief afresh. On my ear they fell all gentle, soothing, like distant music."

"Ah, once," replied she, "'twas thus with mine, and the thought, Master Hicks, ye fain would know, is this:—How often, when a babe, have I carried *him* in these poor arms through yon green churchyard, and watched him sport among the daisies on the graves! My parents and near kindred lie there, and I loved to think in child so fair as mine their blood ran still; if such pride of a mother's heart was sinful, how hath the Lord humbled and brought it low!"

Then the poor soul brake forth in that lament of a king's, saying the words, "My son, my son, would God I had died for thee!" in a way I never

yet heard them said by human lips before; so that when Master Tooker came in he found me very considerably affected and overcome at sight of a sorrow hopeless and desolate as his wife's. Now he is a person who showeth little outwardly what goeth on within, but, according to the similitude of Scripture, turneth "his face to the wall" when passing through those deeps of anguish, that travail of soul, which certain shallow natures, presuming to judge his stronger one, have argued as denoting want of feeling. Alack! they knew him not. And I observed, as he sate firm and erect in a stiff chair he calleth his easy one, how greatly aged he was in countenance; for since last we met—a brief while agone—the lines of thought on his grave face had changed to furrows. Master Tooker, with a well-seasoned head, hath likewise a heart whose trust in God seems never shaken. "Strong in faith," he alway remembereth that his concerns, both in this world and the next, are under the immediate supervision of a wisdom as perfect as it is omnipotent. In his preaching he is very spiritual —perhaps to an "itching" pair of ears a trifle too exact and deliberate in his sermons. A certain restraining diffidence of powers far from inconsiderable—to my mind not the least pleasing feature in his character—divine grace hath not let prove a hindrance to his ministering in holy things, much to the church's contentment and edification.

After conversing awhile with my bereaved brother and sister, in a manner, I trust, will prove salutary as well as comfortable, I opened the Bible I saw lying on the little walnut-table, experience having long taught me that in affliction no word conveys a balm of healing to the broken heart like God's Word: therefore, inwardly praying the Holy Spirit to direct me, I read—dilating upon sundry verses as I proceeded—the hundred and second Psalm. Next to this tender outpouring of David's soul, I turned me to the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians, lingering over the sublime hope and glory contained in the concluding verses. Then I selected portions of the twentieth and twenty-first chapters of the book of Revelation. When I came to these words, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it," Mistress Tooker, whose head had been bowed all the time, drooped it still lower on her bosom; but by the joined palms of the hands resting upon her knee, and the quivering of her lips, I could see what filled that poor reft heart. Where John in his apocalyptic vision proceeds to say, "And there was no more sea," I stole a second glance, and perceived the fountain of her tears was at last unsealed—they streamed from under her half-closed eyelids, and over her pale cheeks, till they dropt like rain upon her apron.

"True, mother," thought I, "thou canst form no picture of heaven—next to our Lord's presence

there – so lovely to thy mind's eye as that which shutteth out for ever the image of the element which swept thy child from thy embrace." And before I came away, it gave me joy unspeakable to find in her a more composed, comfortable mind; and though I foresee she will be of those who "go softly" the remainder of her pilgrimage, still have I hope our poor chastened sister will yet, with devout submission, be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

But last Sabbath, barely two days after my visit—which was conducted so privily that neither spy nor constable gat inkling of it—good Master Tooker was surrounded by the enemy, and it fell out in this wise:—Being the Lord's day, he, with his wife, were sitting alone together—the work-folk and even the 'prentice wench, who craved leave to see a sick father, were all absent—when, hearing the sound of horses' feet a-down the steep path approaching the house, Master Tooker rose up, went out, and to his great comfort espied three very gracious gentlewomen whom he knew, that had come a good distance on purpose to offer their condolence. Not a few tears did these godly matrons shed while lovingly saluting Mistress Tooker, and many were the pious, tender words exchanged between them. At length, the elder of the gentlewomen proposed Master Tooker should improve this mournful meeting by a breathing of prayer, to

which he gladly assenting, they all meekly and calmly kneeled down together. Now, though our brother is not gifted with "excellency of speech," yet his faith, humility, and grace are such as do seem to draw down blessings from on high ofttimes denied more ready parts and fluent utterance; like Job, he has been enabled to say, touching his present sharp trial, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord;" —therefore it came to pass that whilst he prayed the soul of his wife revived within her; the sad moan, "Can there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" exchanged for heavenlier words, and his own spirit (he told me) being greatly solaced by hearing her repeat after him this promise, "I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God;—yea, I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness," he afresh renewed his supplications for divine help and mercy, and so fervently as to become unconscious of aught passing around—particularly *outside* his house—till startled by a loud voice close to his ear, exclaiming with an oath, "Cease thy praying;" and he and his companions, looking up, beheld the face of an emissary of Master Beare's, scowling in among the roses at the little window. Other men were posted like sentries round the dwelling, to hinder any within from escaping. A messenger was already despatched

for the constables and churchwardens, and these lagged not to answer the summons,—running faster than to put out a fire for a neighbour.

Meanwhile the gentlewomen's serving-man appeared in sight, but scenting something wrong, the varlet turned and fled. Nimble as he was, the spies were not less dapper, for finding upon search none beside the three gentlewomen—and five persons in addition to the folk of the family are required to make up the conventicle number—the spies, though they saw only this man's back and the palfrey's switch-tail vanishing up the bosky lane, actually jotted him down as one of the persons assembled at Norden. Still lacking another to complete their tale, and casting their evil eyes keenly about them, lo, in a field so far off that 'tis monstrous to suppose he could have known or heard what was going on in Master Tooker's premises, they espied Joseph Tripe—a plain honest man, who though not of, is very well understood not to be *against* us—walking pleasantly in the sunshine, and our base foes were so exceeding shameless as to mark this unconscious wight for their desired fifth.

All being now ripe and ready, Master Beare's men, taking what victuals and drink they could find, and using some very rough language to Master Tooker and his friends, left the place themselves. Shortly afterward, the serving lad, who had

hidden himself hard by, perceiving the coast clear, ventured down a second time, to seek the gentlewomen, and they chided him pretty sharply for proving such a craven; but he, knowing for the time present the foe was clean gone, grew valiant thereat, and rode away, looking bold enow to face a lion, his offended mistress tightly grasping his girdle, on her pillion behind him.

As I was penning my last sentence, who should tap at our back-door but dear Master Tooker himself, come after night-fall to bid us farewell, having made up his mind to remove from this part early on the morrow. The sum in which certain parties —of whom Master Beare was the foremost—decided on mulcting him as (they were pleased to say) the *chief offender*, touching the alleged conventicle held at Norden, is thirty pounds. Joseph Tripe is likewise fined ten, and the poor soul hath been like a man in a stound ever since he learnt news of the offence laid to his charge. This fine of Master Tripe's is a blacker piece of injustice than any Squire Reynells or Master Beare have yet dared to carry into effect, and is no doubt intended as a warning to they who, if not belonging to our number, will yet do nought to injure or molest us. Brother Tooker then went on to tell, how a troop of Master Beare's men, headed by the constables, came down upon him in his house, to put in force the justice's warrants. He had about half the money

demanded—times have been strait with him, as most of us—and entreated them to take that, and, considering his sorrowful state, leave him and his wife in peace till the rest could be gotten. Their answer was a shout of derision. John Lucas, clutching the few gold pieces, immediately proceeded to search the chattels and every portion of the premises for more; finding none, they seized and carried off his goods and farming stock, in lieu of the remainder. It grows very plain to us, that these men, though acting under colour of authority, are allowed, by way of reward from those they serve, to pillage and plunder on their own account, knowing *we* dare not call them to a reckoning; so poor Master Tooker and his wife were left with never a cup to drink out of, nor bed to lie upon. "Yet," said he, very sweetly, as well as pertinently, "we have, I trust, a treasure laid up for us, 'where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal;' and ye know, Master Hicks, this world is but our inn, not our home."

"And thy poor wife, my brother—how doth she bear such cruel treatment?"

"Why," replied he, his grave, sad face brightening almost to a smile, "she bore the worry and tumult of the constables and their men, and the spoiling of our goods, and our coming away from the old place last night, as one whom nothing earthly might move more; till, perceiving how sorely hurt

I was, she struggled hard within herself, and at length began to comfort me, as her wont was when I've been cast down before—before——" Master Tooker stopped abruptly.

"Now our Lord be thanked, my brother, for His great mercy. Why, thou art not near as forlorn in thy trouble as I feared. He is still blest who hath a tender, pious, faithful heart knit with his own in this world."

Master Tooker then described how he stood some way off and watched the cart, laden so deep with his effects the horses could scarce drag it up the steep road; and tied fast a-top of all the goods, what should he spy but his own elbow-chair. "In that chair, Master Hicks, you have ofttimes seen me unbend myself."

"In mind, perhaps," thought I, "for in no other way could it *there* be possible."

"And I'm not ashamed to own," he continued, "I set a value on the familiar thing. My father, suffering long with a cruel asthma, affected none other so well. He sate in it when he laid his hands upon my head and blessed me, the day before he died. After I came to be master of a house, and brought home a wife, and in time a fair son was given us, he loved to climb my knees, as I rested in that old chair, and smile upon my breast." Master Tooker's voice faltered.

"Good brother," whispered I in his ear, as he

turned his face away, "shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?"

"Ay, ay," he responded, grasping my hand, "and even to our old age, and even to hoar hairs, will He carry us. He has made and He will bear; even He will carry and deliver us."

Chapter VI.

A Recollection of the Rev. Mr. Hughes.

THE new school-house, builded at sole charge of a certain Master Thomas Crispin, who was born in this town more than threescore years agone, and is now a fuller of great repute in Exon, hath to-day been opened for the first time; and twelve small boys, in suits of grey frieze cloth, and their satchels stored with books, all gifts of the same generous donor, been duly entered as poor scholars. And what I trow will please these urchins better than books and grammar-learning, is their patron's providance of a goodly piece of ground for them to have their boyish gambols in; it showeth his considerateness of their young, fresh, lively natures, and that he knoweth—to speak in figures—an experienced archer keepeth not his bow, though made of sturdy yew, always upon full stretch; and, therefore, the tender, lithe, green

willow-wands of which young children's are fashioned, too tight a strain would soon snap and spoil. I pray God bless this good charity, and cause it, by a wise and pious master's teaching, to become a nursery of souls for heaven.

But Master Crispin the founder's bounty, which raiseth the present flutter of delight among the Kingsbridge folk, so mingles in my thoughts with gentle recollection of one, about the rarest scholar, and also the humblest man, that ever I yet had the honour and happiness to become acquainted with (and of whose learning and piety Master Crispin himself was likewise a warm and true admirer), namely, Master George Hughes, that I shall jot down some particulars concerning this holy minister, a severe sufferer for the truth's sake, and who finished his course not a long while since—happily before the present troubles of these later days were broken out—in this very place.

When mind can reason with mind, and heart speak to heart, in the pure communion of a godly friendship, they who are thus privileged receive foretaste on earth of a joy possessed, in its complete fulness, by the saints above; and of such a nature was the commerce which subsisted several years between the late Master Hughes and myself, knowing neither change nor minishment, till death effected its severance here, to be again, I trust, renewed hereafter. Now, I have heard divers

persons affirm confidently that the solid qualities, on which a steady, lasting friendship is based, belong wholly to the masculine portion of humankind; "for that," quoth they, "which women sometimes profess for each other is but a clatter of words that strikes the ear—weak, unstable, yea, ofttimes treacherous, as winds, waves, feathers, broken reeds, or the like frail, fantastic, deceptive matters." To all such unsound judges I say, Go, read the book of Ruth; the friendship therein depicted loseth nothing, but rather gaineth, by comparison with any other of men upon record. Jonathan and David's was not a whit more tender, true, and faithful than that which subsisted between those two women, Ruth and Naomi.

Master Hughes was endowed by God with a very fine natural capacity, and diligently improved it by applying himself so closely to his studies that his extraordinary proficiency therein soon rendered him conspicuous in everybody's eyes save his own. While still a youth, he became the first fellow of his college, and several persons of after-eminence were his scholars; but what made his character so altogether lovely, and could not fail endear him in a remarkable degree to most men, was the strict piety which pervaded his life down to its minutest actions and kept him "unspotted from the world," coupled with the sweetest, humblest, obligingest disposition, not merely to his equals and superiors

in worldly station—(I speak neither of natural gifts nor learning: few in those things were his compeers)—but to they who were below him in temporal estate, and perhaps sordid and uncivil to boot. Concerning his exemplary behaviour toward such, I cannot refrain making the following observe:—'Tis no great matter, methinks, to regard those with love who are disposed to regard us with the like; but the rub is, to be meek, and gentle, forbearing, and well-affectioned toward they who cross, and thwart, and seek to carry it with a high hand over us; to avoid as a snare of the Evil One the chafed spirit which says, "*They*, not *I*, have offended;" to learn to humble ourselves to the dust for the sake of Jesus. Now, he that hath the grace of God deeply rooted in his heart can show this true charity and humility; he is tender to the peevish and froward—yea, submitteth (as did dear Master Hughes, with sometimes a pleasant smile playing round the corners of his mouth) to be prated to conceitedly by the ignorant—and I opine there is no conceit like that begotten of ignorance—on subjects that he understandeth, but which they who presume to teach him know nought, or very little, about themselves. Master Hughes bore impertinencies of this kind with a benign, suave composure, the like of which I never saw equalled; for he was himself the exactest of critics, acutest of disputants, a master of the ancient languages, and, in

fine, most parts of learning; but though he had a body of divinity in his head, grace enabled him to show how the spirit of that body ruled his temper and filled his heart. Words spoken in meekness, not anger and arrogancy, he was wont affirm, were more piercing to others in the long run, and always more comfortable to the speaker himself; and he eschewed a victory which was the fruit of strife, as he would a weak and sinful compliance in things spiritual; with this one saving clause, he ever sought to yield his will to that of others rather than bow theirs to his. To my mind, there is something in such a mild and gracious submissiveness which showeth truer greatness of soul than wrangling for, yea, perhaps obtaining, an earthly crown and kingdom. And, as in those times when all things seemed to favour him (Master Hughes enjoyed a long calm of prosperity), he had never been unduly elated, so, in the trial of adversity, proved he firm and steadfast.

This man, of such a heavenly disposition, was not only silenced in his ministry, but, 'tis thought, on account of the extraordinary high esteem which his admirable preaching, zealous labours, and large charities—for he resigned a considerable living—had procured him, the hearts of certain parties in high places were the more rankled with malice, and, upon a very empty charge, or, rather, no charge at all, he was sent to St. Nicholas Island, and con-

fined so long in a damp prison close to the sea, that he thereby contracted an incurable distemper. In his captivity Master Hughes had a fellow-sufferer —at some distance—whose punishment for the same offence as his own made his heart sorer, and yet gladder, he afterwards told me, than tongue could express. This was Master Obadiah Hughes, his son, a young man of most promising parts and piety, and of so generous a spirit, and genteel a deportment, he merits the highest praise I can give, which is, that he hath proved himself worthy his father; and Master Hughes was wont to say with emotion, "Obadiah studied assiduously, and when ready to take his degree they ejected him from Oxford, for nought save his nonconforming. He hath been in a still sharper college since; our Divine Master himself suffered in the same school when upon earth; adversity hath prepared my son for the ministry, better than all the degrees which can be conferred. The cross is the way to the crown."

In his sea-girt prison Master Hughes so won upon his surly gaoler as to get letters passed between himself and Obadiah, which truly were drops of sweetness in the full cup of sorrow wrung out to them. At length his friends, by giving their security (without his knowledge) for a large sum of money, obtained his freedom; but only upon this condition, that he whose whole life had been spent in doing good to others, should not

reside within twenty miles of his late parish. Poor Master Hughes's health being utterly broken, he made no demur; and craving rest, quiet, and, as he said—with exception of his children and friends —to be forgotten by all upon earth, came, under these circumstances, quite as in the natural order of things, to Kingsbridge. He had then been long widowed; his beloved Obadiah, likewise set at liberty, was removed to another part of the kingdom; and Master John Howe so sorely harassed, that he went over to Ireland, and remained a good while there.

Master Howe was married to Master Hughes's daughter, a mild-eyed gentlewoman, and, what I would have all female folk, soft-voiced, and a great peacemaker. Without regular beauty of features, Mistress Howe has so lovely a soul informing hers, that the first instant I beheld I likened her to those modest flowers which love best the shade—the violet, or the lily folding up its green sheath of leaves, if the wind prove rude, or the sun too bold in his hot gaze; and I marvelled not a man of Master Howe's sagacity and deep discernment, who doubtless might, had he so chosen, have culled the fairest rose a-growing in the garden of womankind, preferred the taking for a bosom-flower one, if less brave of hue, excelled by none in sweetness and fragrance.

Master Howe was wont to correspond largely

with his father-in-law, and they most times writ each other in Latin. The following, in a letter of Master Hughes's, was somewhat like a presage. Master Howe's house caught fire; but a heavy rain fell and seasonably made it out. That very day he received an epistle from Master Hughes, concluding with this benediction, which done into English is, "Let the dew of heaven be upon your dwelling."

For the reasons already assigned, the end of Master Hughes's earthly pilgrimage was uncheered by either the tender ministrations of wife or children; and some folk might count it desolate: yet 'twas not so; if solitary, he was not forsaken; never were the actings of faith and hope more lively and vigorous in him than now. "The close of my life," I heard him say, "would be like a very tranquil summer's even, if it were not for this heavy cloud resting upon God's church," meaning the ejection of so many faithful ministers—and who faithfuller than he?—from her midst. And a man beside of such a healing spirit, that he was ready to love all men, if they feared the Lord, and did work righteousness, howsoever they might differ from him in judgment about things less necessary, touching opinion, sentiment, or matters of discipline. And to show how much Master Hughes was esteemed, for this harmonious temper of mind, by divers Episcopal divines, I will record an

instance after he was silenced. The Bishop of Exon held a visitation at Totness; and Master Hughes, knowing nought of it, went thither. He tarried a brief space in the town, and then took his horse to depart; but lo! the clergy—of whom an unusual great number were present—learning Master Hughes was there, left their bishop—they were under the wings of a quiet one—and flocked around him; and, though he tried hard dissuade them to the contrary, would not be hindered companying him a mile on his journey, they in their full canonicals, good Master Hughes riding meekly in their midst; and then took leave of him with as profound a respect as if he had been a bishop himself.

After his retirement to Kingsbridge he could not bear to be idle; and, sharp at times as were his sufferings, continued to divide his time between study, devotion, pious counsel, and conference with friends, who occasionally came to visit him. If the weather proved fair, Master Hughes was oft-times, at noon, to be seen walking up or down the single street that runneth straight through the heart of this little town, in which a man of absent mind, and with a brisk pair of legs, might, or ever he was 'ware, either find them half-way up in salt water, at flow of the tide upon the pretty shelving beach at bottom of it, or out in the middle of a corn-field at the top. There is a row of stone

pillars outside the church wall, and the grand-dames of certain Kingsbridge gossips, still alive and merry, minded well how the last portly Abbot of Buckfast, when, according to his wont, he came to keep Lent here, with all his jovial monks a-chanting behind him, used to draw the bridle of his mule just where the last is—for they were not standing in my lord Abbot's time—close by the churchyard stile; and there stretching out his hands, which the poor kneeling witlings in the street kissed fervently, give them, after his sort, an old man's blessing. Beside these pillars would Master Hughes pace slowly, never failing to cast a look of peculiar mild contemplativeness over the stile, upon the peaceful burying-ground within; his black cloak, from long wear, become near a brown one, and seeming at last almost too heavy for his bent shoulders to bear the weight of; his darned hose hanging loose about his thin legs. And yet this poor decayed gentleman was more than well respected by the townsfolk, for he had a gentleness of dignity all his own, had Master Hughes; moreover, he carefully preserved his independence, preferring to eke out his own means, whatever they were, to receiving assistance, though tendered in the delicatest way, from other folk; and a kind Providence so ordered it as to make them last him to the end. Truly he was of that blessed number who in all sincerity could thank

God for being neither ashamed to live nor afraid to die.

This devoted minister, worn as he was by study, labour, and imprisonment, continued, whenever he was able, to preach and exhort privately, caring for no discourse save what was spiritual. A young minister he loved, upon intimation of a warrant out against him, came hastily to bid Master Hughes farewell, when the latter, in giving him his parting blessing, spake thus:—"This dead cause of reformation, for which we now suffer, shall rise and revive again; salvation shall come to the churches. I die, but you shall live to see it. The very means these men take to suppress and destroy it shall most effectually promote it. Only be cautious that you never engage in any indirect courses about it. Leave God to do His own work in His own way. Your duty is to be quiet and stand still; in returning and believing you shall have rest."

As the flame of a lamp, when on the point of expiring, is sometimes seen to burn with a more vivid brightness, so Master Hughes, who closely resembled one in this particular, that while giving light to others he spent his own life, felt his strength equal to preaching twice upon the Sabbath before he died, concluding his blessed labours with those memorable words, "And now all my work is done." Then Death took Master Hughes by the

hand as if *he* too loved him, and led him away from this world in so inexpressibly gentle and tender a manner, I shall say a word or two concerning it. That the cruel distemper contracted by him in prison made the frail earthly tabernacle all the more ready to be dissolved I doubt not; but this weakness affected little the spirit within, which shone clear and steadfast unto the end. Master Makepeace, who I esteemed much, sat beside him during his last night on earth, of which he gave me the following account. As the evening advanced he ordered his watch should be laid beside him, desiring this friend to observe when it was two o' the morning. "For," said he, "*that is my hour*;" telling him, moreover, that he felt within the sure tokens of a speedy approaching release. Master Hughes then began repeating softly to himself divers portions of Scripture, returning frequently to the fourth verse of the twenty-third psalm. At midnight a cock crowing loudly, direct under the window of his chamber, somewhat startled him, and he asked to be raised up in a sitting posture, which being done, his eyes took careful note, thing by thing, of what his little chamber contained; it seemed as if he were bidding each familiar object farewell. Next he asked for a Bible. "My sight," quoth he, "is yet clear, and methinks, had I a pen, I've still strength left, dear kinsman, true friend, to write your name." Book

and pen were very quickly gotten, and, with his dying hand, he traced the name of Master Makepeace upon the flyleaf, saying pleasantly, "Makepeace art thou by name, and what is better, Makepeace by nature also. In *this* Book of books (and through life I've been the fondest, faithfullest lover of them) I'll now read my last chapter, for its words were precious to me in my prison—yea, more than 'fine gold' to me in my poverty. Trim the lamp; before it go out my spirit shall be loosed." While he was calmly reading the chapter to himself, the eyes of Master Makepeace were riveted upon his countenance, all white and wasted as were the features on which the light of the lamp fell; so singular and heavenly a composure pervaded them, that he could think of nought to liken this divine expression to, save what we conceive an angel's face must wear. When Master Hughes had ended his reading, he turned down the page; it was at the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews—and shut the book. A young maid who loved him as a father, and tended him like a duteous daughter, had mixed a medicine, and begged him tenderly try drink it. He did so; and as she received back the cup, he, regarding her steadfastly, said, "Child, thou hast been very kind and careful in thy attendance upon me; in the name of God I bless thee, and those that shall come after thee." Then he signed for them to lay

him down upon his pillows, and closed his eyelids, saying, with a smile of wonderfully sweet significance, "Dear friends, I'm going *to sleep*." Near an hour he remained as if in a most tranquil slumber; but his low breathing grew fainter and fainter, till, about the time he named, the poor night-lamp began to flicker, and the maid's eyes, which had never wandered from Master Hughes's face, perceived, pale as it was, a deeper paleness still—a paleness that was stealing like a shadow over it, yet without ruffling or disturbance of a single feature—his whole aspect remaining so calm and changeless that she and Master Makepeace, though closely watching him, knew not the exact moment of his departure. Now this young woman is by nature of exceeding fearful, timorous spirit, and moreover had, confessedly, a great dread, amounting almost to horror, of death and dying—yea, like to prove by experience the words of the Apostle, and be all her life "subject to bondage" through fear of that "last enemy" to be overcome by the believer. Her affection for Master Hughes made her zealous in serving him, and verily the fruit of his blessed legacy to her began to show itself in the same instant he left this world for a better, by the immediate deliverance of her soul from the slavish thrall and fear which had hitherto enchained it. Long afterwards, she observed to me, with tears of gratitude, "Ever since I saw sweet Master Hughes die,

my old terrors respecting death have, through God's mercy, been so entirely taken away, that my only care now is to be found, like him, ready and joyful when I shall hear the sound of the Bridegroom's welcome voice."

Chapter VII.

The Field Meeting and the Conventicle.

TROUBLE now leaves daily traces in my memory, by which I can reckon time near as well without as with a calendar; and, by one of these same sorrowful tokens, I mind 'tis three weeks agone this very night, that, as usual, under cover of the darkness, my wife and I got home safe from Surley Butts. Our clothes were miry and dank, for the heavy rain had soaked them thoroughly; and by reason of standing in this plight such long time in the field, my limbs ached and shivered so, I feared I was going to fall sick.

A month before, the brethren designed convene a meeting at this our old spot; but the spies were so thick about they durst not risk it; and when they did venture, we stole away singly or in pairs. As many as three seen together in company might have set them upon our track. Though John

Lucas was believed out o' the town, Master Beare was known to be at his own house.

On reaching the place appointed, I found several persons gathered there waiting my arrival; some of them I had not had speech with for months, and these gave me greeting so glad, yet, alack! so sorrowful, I was moved almost to weeping. They had set a large stone for me to stand upon while preaching, and on this first kneeling down, I lifted up my voice in prayer. Just as I had made an end of praying, the black and gloomy clouds let fall great drops of rain, which quickly became a torrent that drenched us miserably. Scarce a quarter-mile distant was a barn; but, though empty, we knew we must not venture there. The sight of its warm thatch roof and mud walls, plainly discernible from where I stood, begat in me at this moment a lively and strong desire for shelter—not on my own account, (God forbid!) but for sake of the women and weaker aged folk standing around, meek and patient, in wet cloaks and doublets sodden with the rain; so that I groaned inwardly, "How long wilt thou forget us, O Lord? how long wilt thou hide thy face from us?" Yet though the flood showed no token of abating, all present signed me to go on, and, being greatly heartened by their steadfastness, I spake a good while from these words:—"Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not." And soon

I warmed comfortably with my subject, so that to me it no longer mattered—and judging by the earnest faces of those a-listening, it mattered not to them either—whether 'twas fair sunshine or foul weather. 'Tis true, more than once a gust of wind, sweeping and rustling among the trees, made the women start, and, the better to hearken, push their hoods back from their ears. I sometimes fear I may not alway be let keep mine by the sides of my head. But, God be thanked, the enemy lay still, and this time gave us no disturbance.

Our good wives and sisters continue to help us greatly by their prayers, zeal, discreetness, and wonderful patience under suffering. If the "weaker vessels" in feebleness of body, I am not ashamed to confess, in all other matters they approve themselves *our* equals: and here I make note, from my own private observes, that those among the sisters who prate most fluently—and few there be of womankind without a sort of natural gift that way—are not of so choice a spirit as they who say little, and that little modestly, and with reluctance to be heard speaking. These last are sure to be found the best minders of their homes and business, serving their husbands in love to the uttermost, and exceeding particular careful in looking after and training their young children, doing all things in fear of the Lord. Yea, at times, with some confusion as well as wonderment,

I have been inclined to conceit that gracious women, let them be never so burthened with work-a-day cares—and religion hindereth not, but rather inciteth to a more exact performance of all needful household duties—do show keener zeal and relish, and more lively enjoyment, in our assemblies for worship together, and other solemn exercises, than their husbands and brothers. Taken generally, the very nature of woman seems to me finer, more spiritualized, and *devoted* than man's; and what I shall now jot down, in my opinion goes some way to prove it: — At those seasons, in days less troublous, when we were wont to gather regularly in our meeting-house, not only for Sabbath preaching (which I except), but also prayer among the brethren, expounding Scripture, and the like, the larger number of they who were present most-times proved to be sisters. On a certain occasion, I mind noting the unseemly odds of near two hoods to one wig.

The chill it turned out I had taken at the field-meeting kept me in-doors for some days, shivering like one stricken with an ague, till I was fain to say, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." My good wife prepared and zealously administered a potion which, had any quacksalver given it, I should have conceited must be designed to make the man who swallowed it sicker than he was before, for to the palate 'twas bitter enow;

however, by God's blessing, not long after the taking the physic, I began to mend; and while slowly pacing our chamber, meditating upon the subject of my next sermon, and turning over in my thoughts when and were 'twas likely the Lord would see fit direct me to deliver it, who should glad us with a visit but Master Hope! The smile upon his cheery face spoke of good news, ere his tongue could utter it; and the first, and by far the best, was that Sir William Bastarde—of whom more anon—was daily expected at his seat of Garston, near Kingsbridge; the next, that John Lucas had been seen leave his house very early in the morning, and go in the direction of Master Beare's, from whence 'twas known for certain this well-matched pair, in a very private manner, rode away together, with intent (Lucas's wife Joan whispered to her gossip, who lost no time in sending the matter a little further) of not returning till after the morrow.

"Female folk," said Master Hope, "how much soever they may differ in temper or conditions, are pretty much alike in this particular—the being sure to let the cat jump out o' the bag. I know them well," quoth he, conceitedly.

Alack! it never entered mind so artless as his that the tongue of a liar was here employed for none other purpose than to lure us into the snare our enemies had laid for us.

"You are still," he went on, "too disordered, Master Hicks, to preach out o' doors," (and I felt I was,) "but the brethren wish not to lose this most excellent opportunity"—meaning the alleged absence of our inveterate foes—"of assembling themselves at any hour you shall name at my house."

"Nay," said I, "rather let it be here; then, if a danger should follow—" and I looked round upon my bare-stripped walls.

"By this time we reckon," replied Master Hope, "there is a good forty miles—and I would 'twere forty thousand—betwixt us and Master Beare and his trusty servant, for we guess the road they've taken. Squire Reynells is a-bed, by reason of his gout, and cannot move a leg."

"And our good neighbours, Master Hope," interrupted I, "after the pitiful, friendly spirit they've shown, will never turn informers, and some of them may be among us at the meeting. A good seed, brother, hath been sown in the hearts of certain I could name, which giveth promise of bearing blessed fruit hereafter."

"Then I will order it as you desire," said Master Hope; and straightway he departed to tell the folk that very early on the morrow they might venture up the well-known garden path, and, with little dread of molestation, once more gather under my poor roof.

That the dear souls a-hungering for the Bread of Life I along with other ministers have been wont to break to them—and in so doing be richly fed ourselves—are very anxious to profit by each scanty and uncertain time for worship we can now avail ourselves of, was shown by our back chamber (the largest we have), shortly after 'twas light, being filled so full that several persons were forced to stand upon the stairs. Dear Master Christian Jellinger entered, looking cheerfuller than usual; and, as I noted his white hairs and failing strength, a thought came over me like a prescience, that, of all present, how much was he the nearest heaven. At a little distance from him sate a buxom wife, by name Cicely Pickweather, and whose tongue, upon occasion, I do believe, can wag as fast as e'er the wing of a swallow can fly. Though neither ill-natured, nor otherwise unagreeable, Mistress Pickweather hath wrought some little mischief in the church, through her vain desire—being in this particular a kind of she-Diotrephes—to "have the pre-eminence;" and while striving to be thought of note and consequence, by her own talk soon discovereth herself at bottom to be a very shallow person. Now, regardless both of place and season, she must needs essay to gain the ear of Master Jellinger; but he, turning his head gently, yet resolutely, quite another way, fixed his deep grey eyes—which most-times did seem a-looking at what nobody else could see

—on a portion of the sky discernible from our window, still ruddy, by reason of the newly-risen sun, who coming "like a bridegroom out of his chamber," the crimsoned east, left, as he rose higher in the heavens, a track of brightness behind him, which seemed a path of light leading up to those gates "not shut at all by day." And this radiant parting in the clouds, Master Jellinger regarded as intently as if he were a traveller then about to thread that glorious unknown way.

Meanwhile, Mistress Pickweather, balked in her forward attempt to engage him in converse, next singled out a bashful young country-maid, sitting on the same bench, in kirtle of sad-coloured stuff, coarse straw hat, and with basket and pattens by her side; for this good girl had walked miles through a lonesome, miry road, that morning, in order to be present at our meeting. The advances of busy Mistress Pickweather she responded to so innocently, and with such exceeding respect, that the former, quite elated at finding so meek a listener, began to hold forth in a manner which made it necessary for us to commence the service without delay.

An hour—it appeared like a moment spent in a better world than this—was passed in alternate exercise of prayer and exhortation. Master Jellinger could not speak much, but what he did say—though a man never exact in his composures—sunk deep

into our hearts, and will be long remembered, for 'twas the spiritual, divine language of one far more nearly akin to heaven than earth.

After this fine, tranquil breathing, Master Hope, who is of a gladsome nature, actually proposed our singing a hymn. There was a brief demurring among the prudentest; at length they consented; but, afore it was begun, my thoughts were drawn away an instant by the sweet, clear notes of a bird perched upon the extreme top of the thorn-tree in our garden. Methought that little, happy chorister warbled forth a matin of praise and gratitude more acceptable to his Maker than cloistered monk or nun had ever learned to chant; and he did appear so to enjoy *the liberty* of pouring out the gladness of his little melodious heart in song, as, at hour like this, could not fail touch mine sensibly.

Master Hope, in a sort of pleasing rapture, then pitched the tune, and we sung, "Thy mercies, Lord, for aye endure," with voices at first low and quavering—we knew we were doing a very bold thing—but, as our confidence increased, they grew steadier; and if, for lack of practice, we did get somewhat queerly out o' measure of the time, yet were our hearts knit in accord so harmonious, that I doubt not those feeble notes mingled acceptably with the songs and harpings of the angels above. A humble lay brother of "low estate" next prayed. Of scholarly learning he knoweth

very little, but his soul is replete with "the wisdom that cometh from above." This Enoch Trueman's life doth seem more "hid with Christ in God," more mortified in carnal affections, than almost any other man's I wot of; and I count it a precious privilege to know and be joined with him in Christian fellowship. And lo, as he prayed, the Holy Spirit gave him such grand, earnest utterance of what filled his soul, as light fills a temple, even to overflowing, a power did seem to tremble upon his lips which minded me of that vouchsafed the captain of the hosts of Israel, who commanded, and "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed" in her course; or the mighty prophet, at whose word fire came from the Lord, and rain fell in abundance from heaven.

How all feeling of our present oppressed, miserable condition was lost, as the glories of an eternal future unrolled themselves before our ravished sense! The Angel of the Covenant was overshadowing us with His wings, though mortal eyes might not behold their awful splendours; and the stifled sob, the fervent response, or the rapt silence of the assembled worshippers, told how deeply, according to their several capacities, they were affected. Yea, mere children as yet in years did show, according to the imperfect nature of their small experience, that they too felt something not to be expressed by common words and emotions, as

the cry of this "man of God" went up from among us. I noted one, "the only son of his mother," and she too a widow—and 'tis plain to many beside myself, our sister, a truly gracious woman in other particulars, doth err concerning this child, and is, I fear, unmindful of the Apostle's injunction, "Keep yourselves from idols;" for in her young son's slightness of frame, and the red burning spot on either of his cheeks, there are tokens which tell me her earthly punishment is preparing by Him who is "a jealous God," and will have the whole heart; that a worm is already gnawing at the root of the gourd, in whose hoped-for shadow she expecteth to find future solace and delight.

I watched this boy pluck gently his mother's mourning cloak, and when she turned, he, fixing his large, over-bright eyes upon her mild, tearful face, said softly, "Will Christ, sweet mother, count us worthy to suffer like the holy martyrs Master Trueman spake of—they who bear the palms, and wear the golden crowns? Ah, would *I were among them!*"

"Peace, my child," she answered, in a hurried voice; "and, dear heart, speak not to *me* again in this wise."

Then I moved aside, for their low murmured talk affected me.

But Mistress Pickweather must now forsooth

(with a tongue they on the stairs might hear) declare that, for her part, if death were to summon her that very instant, she felt more than ready—yea, would rejoice at thought of leaving a world which she had found nought save a desert and a howling wilderness, whose paths were beset with pitfalls, and also very full of thorns. Yet, so far, few have had a smoother road, in regard to things temporal, than this same velvet friend of ours. And rumour saith she hath not failed both use and enjoy them pretty comfortably. "The words, 'Fear not,'" pursued Mistress Pickweather, "are the most fitting, I conceit, for myself, which can be thought upon. All doubts I cast behind me; indeed, I never was troubled with many. What say you, Mistress Hicks?"

I lost part of my wife's answer, as she spoke very low, yet caught the conclusion: "I feel I am so weak, that I pray daily to be preserved from ever becoming tempted like Peter to deny our Heavenly Master, or ashamed to suffer for His cause."

"Sheer want of confidence," retorted Pickweather, briskly; "you lack the faith of *assurance*" (here Master Jellinger gave a short dry cough), "and we all know," continued this same prating dame—and she smiled with immense self-complacency—"*some* believers have a much larger portion of grace than others. Ye are 'ware, my sister, a

small poor vessel"—and her eyes fell disparagingly upon the young country-maid, who happening to look up and meet them, blushed deeply—"cannot be expected to hold the same noble measure as a great one."

"Yet it may be every whit as full," quoth my wife, with displeasure; and taking the hand of the girl affectionately, said, in a pretty, soothing manner, "of ourselves alone, what can the best, the bravest of us do? Why, nothing—absolutely nothing."

"Good mistress," answered the humble creature, brushing away a tear, "my cry to the Lord is, 'What time I am afraid I will trust in thee.'"

"Thou canst not have a better," was my hearty rejoinder; and thinking that to a person so wise in her own esteem as Mistress Pickweather some rebuke was highly needful, I read, as impressively as I could, the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, and proceeded to make a few closing remarks; but I was interrupted almost at the first, by a woman on the stair-head screaming out—

"Master Beare and the constables are coming."

"They are *here!*" answered the voice of John Lucas, with a hoarse chuckle.

Chapter VIII.

Fighting with Beasts at Ephesus—Departure of the Rev. Mr. Jellinger for "the land that is very far off."

ON rushing to the door, and then the window, we discovered a party of men had been lying in ambush for our unsuspecting selves, by creeping stealthily through the fence which parted my plot of ground from our neighbours, some of whom were at the meeting, and those not present protested their unconsciousness of the treachery (and I piously believe they spake the truth). Our enemies completely surprised us. The street porch was guarded by persons armed with rapiers, while at the back-door peered in the malignant, ill-favoured visage of John Lucas; but, loud above all other sounds, the voice of Master Beare might be heard roaring in the passage that "now he had unearthed the fox." Meanwhile the struggling folk upon the stairs made a kind of barrier between him and myself, and

Master Hope, leaning over the rail, demanded his warrant for making us prisoners.

"Warrant, quotha," shouted he. "Why, *this*—" (drawing his sword)—"and 'tis the best such knavish traitors as ye can be served with;" then (fearful words upon his blasphemous tongue) he struck out right and left, producing the maddest terror and confusion.

But just as Master Beare succeeded in setting a foot upon the stair, one of our friends, watching the opportunity, suddenly closed and grappled with him. Master Beare, thus taken unawares, had barely power to attempt the giving a desperate thrust by way of reprisal, when the fingers of a hand like a vice of iron—'twas the smith's I have before made mention of, who showeth us much kindness, whether in part for the sake of the country damsel, I will not take upon me to determine—wrested it out of his grasp, snapped it in twain as if it had been a lady's riding-wand, and contemptuously flung away the fragments; which John Lucas perceiving, presented (as he thought, unobserved) a pistol—for this time our foes came provided with deadlier weapons than staves and cudgels. I felt a pair of soft arms wildly flung around me, while something passed my head near enow, and of a power—though I remained unscathed—to make me stagger, and for the moment feel stunned. But, thanks to God's protecting mercy, the bullet spent

itself in the plaster of a wall just beyond us, which it cracked, and sent into a shower of fragments on those around: also my poor wife, whose life is dearer to me than my own, escaped unhurt from the effects of the cruel aim *her* eye detected taking at mine.

"'Tis the third time I've been baffled, Master Parson; but, alive or dead, I'll have ye," said Lucas, as my eyes again encountered the baleful gaze of his, which now did seem actually to burn with smothered fury; and their silent rage had in it, I confess, a certain power, strong enough to make me shudder. Yet have I studied God's Word too closely to fear, beyond a moment of passing weakness, aught that one of His sinful creatures can do to injure me. Satan himself might not harm a hair of Job's head, otherwise than as the Lord permitted; and He is likewise, thought I, "my strength and my shield;" of whom or what, therefore, shall I be afraid?

But such a feeling of horror and indignation possessed the minds of the brethren at the attempt of John Lucas upon my life, that they decided, let the consequences to themselves be what they might, on driving Master Beare and his men out of the place. Declaring boldly they would risk all things rather than leave me helpless and a prisoner in the hands of persons so void of ruth as our persecutors, and being more than a match in number, they carried out their purpose; though, what with the

struggling together of men below, and the clamour and shrieking of women above, I did make sure my poor house would now be certainly pulled about our ears.

And there was one voice whose screams rose louder than any of the others: their knife-like sharpness was so remarkable, that, amid all the horrid din, I caught these words—"Don't kill *me!* Ah, spare *my* life! Sweet Sir, show pity! I'll give ye money, or *do whatsoever ye list.*"

"Oh! bragging tongue, that didst wag so glibly," thought I, "scarce half-an-hour agone, how is thy note changed!" Then followed such dismal, unearthly cries of "murther" from the same quarter, that I darted at once into the thick of the fray, and lo! who should I espy but Mistress Pickweather, with a creature of Master Beare's pointing his rapier towards her heart, as if he fully meant despatching the poor thing upon the instant? That the fellow had no serious intention of slaying our friend I feel certain; yet what to him was nought save brutal sport, to her was like the bitterness of death itself. Frighted out of her five wits—for the *faith of assurance* was all gone—Mistress Pickweather had fallen upon her knees, and, in most abject wise, implored compassion. At sight of the woman's distress, I felt my blood boil, and seizing with all my strength her assailant—whereby I got an ugly cut from the sword—succeeded in making him de-

sist tormenting his victim; but before I was 'ware, he, very nimbly disengaging his right arm, dealt me a blow on the temple, which felled me to the ground, and ere I could recover myself, I saw him catch the buckram skirt of Mistress Pickweather, and, with a scornful laugh, give her a twirl—as if she had been some very light matter indeed—right on to my trampled garden, from whence this poor soul fluttered off much in the condition of a bird spoiled of all its fine feathers, and no other hurt beside, I rejoice to say, save terror. Moreover, our sister hath, I trow, gotten a *practical* lesson in humility that will last her her lifetime.

Meanwhile, Master Beare, though a very strong-built, powerful man, and nearly beside himself with fury, had found this, his work of "unearthing a fox," so hard, it compelled him to measure his length in the passage. John Lucas was thrust into the street, where the 'prentice lads—and I wot the fathers and brothers of some of 'em—who for reasons of their own mislike him hugely—(doubtless they remembered in what merciless sort he hath clapped as many of their number as he could in the cage, or the stocks, with ofttimes a set-up in the pillory to boot, and gathering somewhat from those ejecting him of his late murtherous attempt on myself)—declared they would not lose such an opportunity of paying him (ay, and with usury) back in his own bad coin; but Master Hope, who is a

favourite with most of the town-folk, and another of the brethren, gat among the young men, and besought them, if they valued our lives, to do the plotting, mischievous, cruel fellow no hurt; and their counsel so far prevailed, that, with exception of a general burst of abhorrence at his wickedness, which pursued him to his threshold, he escaped without a hand being raised in reprisal.

The great boots of Master Beare, still kicking desperately against the shins of those who had overcome him, followed ignominiously after. He was conveyed to the town tavern, and certain friendly folk promised to keep an eye upon his movements, and report them to us. The remainder of this evil crew, though they flourished about their swords (thereby causing several persons who, conceiting from the uproar we were being massacred, had come to our help, to take to their heels instead), when they perceived what unexpected as well as resolute numbers they would have to contend with, and noting beside unmistakable signs of a sound dressing, like very quickly to be administered to themselves, dispersed without giving us much further annoyance.

And here I must observe, it caused me not a little uneasiness to see how Robin Cheke comported himself, the stripling that fared so ill at the hands —perhaps I ought rather to say *hoofs*—belonging to Master Beare, and afterward, the staff of John

Lucas. There was he, upon the stair-head, regarding his enemies' rout and present discomfiture with such a vengeful expression in his face, that I intend reproving him the first opportunity; a hearty forgiveness of those who injure us being one of our Lord's especial commands, and a feature of import in His divine prayer. Alack! the evil spirit of persecution gendereth hatred and bitterness, even in natures gentle, sweet, and affectionate, as, till then, I believed our young Robin's to be.

We were none of us unmindful of dear Master Jellinger, but to get him removed during the tumult was a thing impossible; and to our consternation a kind of fit seized him, from which we feared he would hardly fetch again. After my house had been cleared of the foe, Master Trueman and I spread a pallet, and laid him carefully upon it, while another of the brethren hied to the house of a very ancient, well-respected gentleman, who for more than half a century practised physic in this town, and having gotten much wealth, hath ceased to follow his calling; yet, to his credit, he is ever ready to give the poor and distressed advice and help for sake of charity. To him, therefore, went our brother, with tidings of Master Jellinger's being struck, as it appeared, for death, and prayed the old physician come see if he could do aught to save him; and Master Rich readily consented, though one of those Episcopalian gentlefolk, of

whom some highly disapprove what they are pleased to call our contumacy, while others of their section scruple not in private to declare we are too hardly dealt by, and likewise show symptoms of displeasure at the conduct of our oppressors.

Master Rich, before leaving his house, opened the door of a parlour to speak with his lady, and our friend looking in, to his very great amaze saw sitting upon a carven chair none other than the poor little country-maid, looking as if just recovered from a swoon, and tended by Mistress Rich herself. It appeared this girl, during the affray, had contrived to squeeze herself, though somewhat plump in person, out of a little casement my wife showed her in the side-wall, which appears to me scarce big enow for a cat to go through. Being very active, she lighted safely upon the ground, and, with a parting nod, away the damsel sped. But ere well out of sight, some lynx-eyed man of Master Beare's caught sight of the flying figure, and, joined by another comrade in wickedness, started in full chase after her. If nearly "swift of foot as a wild roe," she knew the long legs of her pursuers were gaining upon her, and coming to a pair of stately gates which stood open, she rushed into the court of the mansion beyond. Heeding not a serving-man just a-coming out of the porch, the girl bounded up the wide staircase in the hall, and then, half-dead with fright, dropped down before a chamber-door, which

was instantly opened by an aged gentleman, clad in a loose flowing kind of robe, with a broidered night-cap on his head—to wit, Master Rich himself, who gazed astonished upon the panting, speechless creature, without hat or cap (she had lost both in her flight), and unbound hair, lying at his feet. And surely 'twas by the ordering of Providence this good young maiden fled for shelter where she did; for though, as I've already said, Master Rich is a stiff Episcopalian, and at first felt disturbed by the notion of harbouring or giving countenance to a Conventicler, his kindness gat the better of his prejudice, and under Master Rich's roof even, followers rude and rough as Master Beare's presumed not intrude themselves.

But a poor young man I have hitherto made no mention of, was handled so cruelly in his attempt to get away from my house, that we fear the consequence; and he could ill bear this treatment, by reason of a heavy sickness, which, some short time since, brought him very near the grave. "So near," quoth he, to a friend, "that ever since I seem to see my shadow rest upon it." And 'twas during this affliction he became, we trust, "born again," left his former carnal companions, and so delighteth in seeking instruction from, and holding pious converse with, godly folk, that, without fear, we have received him among us, as giving what I will always maintain is the best token of a renewed

heart—to wit, an amended life—though none hold more strongly than I, according to the sound and comfortable doctrine of election, that by God's free grace alone can man be saved; and, touching his own salvation, "it is the gift of God." But oh, the "exceeding riches" of that grace, the greatness of that gift, the freedom of the pardon offered through Him who "liveth and reigneth to make intercession for us;" so, then, if good works profit nothing, yet are they the certain fruits of a new nature in Christ; for unless the conversation be agreeable to the Gospel, our faith in Him is only a dead faith.

At the meeting I, noting how eagerly this youth seemed, as it were, to drink in the words of those who took part there, said to myself, "Truly, here is 'one that thirsteth for the waters of life,' and if he hath no money yet shall he 'buy and eat, yea, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'" Seeing, moreover, his wan cheeks and wasted limbs, I thought fit to say somewhat concerning the brevity, even at its longest, of that span of time *we* call a life, and our tenure of it as being quite as uncertain as the stroke of death is inevitable; therefore did not the main concern of the former ought to consist in solemn preparation for the latter? "Our earthly house of this tabernacle," continued I, "is a structure so marvellous, fine, and delicate, that in prime of health and

strength, a very little accident, which produceth a few swift hours of suffering, yea, it may be scarce a moment's space of agony, proveth sufficient to bid it return to the dust from whence 'twas taken. Yet the believer in Christ, how sudden soever his summons to enter his Master's presence, is *always* ready, for he knoweth whose blood hath ransomed, whose grace is sufficient, whose strength is made perfect even in his very weakness; yea, that the more feeble, trustful, and like a child in heart, the closer will he feel the everlasting arms embracing and supporting him, till the 'deep waters' through which he is passing prove but a tide of hope and bliss, on which his frail bark is borne calmly, ofttimes triumphantly, towards its glorious haven."

The apostolic injunction of "Let the strong help the weak," was, methinks, well followed, when those of the church who were able, cared for the old and weak, sheltering them as best they might from the violence of our assailants; and though some were sorely bruised, and others greatly ruffled in spirit, yet none received the hurt which did the young man I just made allusion to. Two of the brethren having gotten him away some considerable distance, and believing he was safe, at his earnest entreaty went back to assist the folk left behind. He made shift to get along till, upon turning a corner, the same ruffians who had chased the country-

maid came up, and seized the poor, feeble soul, shouting,—

"We make you a prisoner!"

"I pray you let me go, my masters," answered he, "for, as ye can perceive, I am scarce strong enow to walk, and feel as if a-near the end of my last journey."

"Mayhap, thou whining hypocrite, I know how to make the journey yet a little shorter," said the stoutest of his assailants, at the same time plucking a pistol from his belt, and holding it close to the defenceless sick man's head, who thereupon naturally expected instant death; and the effect of this brutishness to a person in his condition proved such that blood gushed out of his mouth and nostrils, which the wicked ones seeing, thought he was killed with fright, and so left him.

The poor youth remained in this state till some Christian folk spied his misery; by them he was lifted up as carefully as they could do it, and carried to a bed, from which we hardly think he will be permitted rise again.

And now, having made this wide digression, I return to dear Master Jellinger, and would I had power to portray in fitting language how he passed away from among us, leaving our poor converse for the society of angels, and his earthly cares and dolours to dwell with Him in whose "presence is fulness of joy"—at whose "right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Master Rich, the physician, upon ascertaining the nature of his seizure, pronounced that he had only a few hours to live; but applying certain means, with the skill of his wonderful art and long experience, our brother recovered the use of his organs, though for a season his mind remained in utter bewilderment.

"He will again," said Master Rich, keenly regarding him, "become sentient and reasonable before he dies;"—and so it proved.

In poor Master Jellinger's deliration there was something more than ordinarily moving, for, as I've already mentioned [see chap. ii.], he came from foreign parts, and we could make out, though he spake rapidly in the language of his native land, that his spirit had flown back to the days of his youth. Now he conceited himself in the streets of a very ancient city, with stately gates and cathedral towers, while his ears grew filled with the sound of the river rushing past its walls. Then he babbled much student lore, and once started wildly at what he said was the sound of the trumpet calling him to battle; for, strange to tell, this most retiring, melancholy gentleman bore arms awhile in the righteous cause of civil and religious freedom in his own country, and had had before his hair-breadth 'scapes from a foe hasting toward him upon scarce peacefuller ground. Anon our poor chamber became transformed into a lake (for years he was

a teacher in the schools at Geneva), of wondrous, almost celestial beauty, blent gloriously with a "sea of fire mingled with glass."

But the most tender image of all arose while my good wife was gently bathing his temples with something Master Rich had given her for the purpose.

"Ah, little precious hand," quoth he, "how many a year hath thy poor son longed to have it laid again upon his head! Sometimes in dreams of sleep it might; yet when I waked 'twould crumble into dust. Ah, mother mine! The little Bible at thy girdle I've kept close, close to my heart, when 'twas pierced and broken by what proved crueller than death. *No* love of earth e'er found I deep and true as thine."

I shall here observe Master Jellinger married early, and lost his wife before he became an exile for the faith. In England, his gentle birth and other valuable qualities procured him (at the time I speak of) much consideration. My Lord of Winchester was one of his good patrons. He never re-married, and if topic of that sort was casually introduced in his presence, would check it with a sigh so deep—it might be taken for a groan—from which Master Burdwood and I concluded his sorrow for his dead wife was unlike most other men's—who do ofttimes bear these kind of bereavements with a considerable degree of resignation—and 'twas either so profound

as to hinder his making the least allusion to her, or, if otherwise, he might not have been so happy in his wedlock as we were in ours.

But just what Master Rich prognosticated took place: ere the weary wheels of life stood still for ever, his reason returned to him again, clearer, methinks, and in greater vigour and acuteness, than I before remembered, along with the full consciousness that he was a-dying. Calling Enoch Trueman, Master Hope, and myself, each severally by name, he said to us:—"Thanks to the blood of Christ Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin—and nothing, *nothing* else will do for such as ye behold me now—I am going into the haven our Brother Hicks spake of this morning; but you, dear friends, must still abide the storm. 'Have faith in God;' He will stablish, and strengthen, and keep His saints alive till the miseries of the present time be overpast. Yet as gold is tried in the furnace, even so shall ye be tried by the Purifier."

I write this down, because I incline think to dying folk is sometimes vouchsafed a prescient knowledge of things hidden to those who are further removed from the confines of the spiritual world.

Then a change came over the countenance of Master Jellinger; it was the messenger of his departure. And he whom the Lord of Life himself in the flesh "became obedient unto," we knew was beside us. Master Trueman fell upon his

knees, and prayed for our dear brother deep in the swelling of Jordan, till we said, "He is one chosen by God to convoy this parting soul to glory."

Looking earnestly upon the face of Master Jellinger, whose head I supported, and believing him still conscious, I cried, "Give us yet another comfortable token, my beloved brother, if thou canst, of thy everlasting welfare."

He heard me, and through the gathering mist of death, his eyes gazed into mine, while stretching out his right hand, he struggled for speech. I bent down my ear close to his lips, and caught distinctly those blessed words, "To die is gain;" and, so saying, he gave up the ghost.

After a short space, Master Rich went below with me, and I saw fit to tell him, without reserve, the particulars of the circumstance which had brought us to such a disastrous pass; for that we were now within reach of the statutes made o' purpose to punish Nonconformists, I nothing doubted. Moreover, the nature and disposition of our oppressors were too well known not to foresee the rigour with which they would procure their enforcement.

Quoth Master Rich, who had listened patiently, yet still evincing some trifling signs of displeasure, as I proceeded with my sad narration, "You have omitted, Master Hicks, to mention what I incline to think by no means unimportant; and (pardon me) indiscreetly and perversely as I must say you've

acted, touching this late assemblage at your house, it might turn the scale. Master Beare came with no other authority to seize you and your friends than that he thought proper to bestow upon himself. This daring breach of law should be properly resented by the other justices of the peace."

"Alack!" said I, "full well he knew Squire Reynells, who is a willing accessory in our ruin, would readily overlook this assumption of power on his part."

"However much I may differ from, and condemn you in some matters," replied Master Rich, "I've both seen and heard enough this day to make me ready to depose before any magistrate, that, all things being duly weighed, I consider the resistance made, to wit, the defence of your property—"

"*Property!* Good Sir, look round you."

"Well, let it be your lives — that cowardly villain, John Lucas, deserves what I fear there's little chance of his getting — should be viewed as—"

"Sir, I thank you heartily for your kind intentions," said I, interrupting him o' purpose—for I felt the innate pride of my corrupt heart rise against this suing for compassion, when 'twas *justice* we craved from our fellow-men.

Master Rich shook me by the hand so cordially I winced. "What is it?" asked he in surprise.

"I'd forgotten," replied I, "that Wat Campion gave me a prick with his rapier."

But worthy Master Rich would not leave without seeing my hurt, the bleeding of which I had contrived stanch, and keep to myself; and while he attended to and dressed it, I heard my wife called by a woman's voice outside. 'Twas a wench of the tavern.

"Mistress," cried she, "I've slipped away to tell ye Master Beare hath plied himself so hard with liquor that he's now lying dead drunk upon our oaken settle, his wig inside out, and his ruffles torn to shreds. I'll engage, from the cups of sack I've served him myself, he'll do ye no further harm to-night, and as soon's 'tis dark enow his men mean to get him away—and a good riddance—from our house to his own. Better," continued the wench, kindly, "he'd keep to coursing, and killing his hares and foxes, than quiet folk as ye are."

"You mean us well, I perceive," said my wife, bursting into tears; for good-will and sympathy from such a quarter fairly overcame her. "But, my girl," sobbed she, "we wish Master Beare no harm, and may he be forgiven his cruelty, and turned from the evil he seems bent upon doing us!"

Robin Cheke here ran in with the news that the sky westward was red by reason of a great light; so great was it, the four pinnacles of the old church-

tower on the hill could be seen distinct as if 'twas day.

"Ah!" exclaimed Master Hope, starting up, "I know what that means—Sir William is come."

And so it proved. Amid the blazing of bonfires and ringing of bells the knight was entering his place at Garston.

Chapter IX.

A Gracious Magistrate.

OF all country gentlemen in these parts is Sir William Bastarde reckoned the chiefest. When he cometh into them, which I grieve to add is rarely—(during the period of my sojourn here, I've ne'er till very lately had the hap to see him)—all poor, oppressed, and wretched folk—guided by the instinct which leads weak and helpless creatures seek protection in the quarter most likely to afford it—flock to his house at Garston. For this representative of an ancient and knightly family is so courteous in demeanour, that a curtsey from a servant wench, or awkward attempt at a bow from the most rustical clown, will he acknowledge with a grace that makes them feel they could run their lives out to do him service. But this freedom and charmingness of manner doth not, I've been told, hinder his possessing in the completest degree a certain cool,

high-bred, undescribable power of checking any insolent, presumptuous approach to familiarity from his inferiors in station; and they who experience its rebuke once, generally take care to provoke not the like a second time.

"Let me avise that there be no delay," quoth Master Hope, "in laying our present hard case before Sir William; *he*'ll not turn a deaf ear, take my word for't, to what we have to say."

I readily assented, though of not quite so sanguine a temper as our brother. For I had felt, upon hearing of the arrival of this gentleman in our neighbourhood, pretty much like one who sees a sudden flash of light illumine an abyss of darkness into which he is fallen, and showing him a rope: it *may* prove a rope of sand, yet he hopes to cling to it awhile in safety.

"If Sir William Bastarde," mused I, "be only half as excellent as report makes him, he will surely evince a spirit tolerant enow in some degree to shield us from the lawless assaults of our most intolerant enemies, who, unless they receive speedy check from a person of weight and influence sufficient to restrain their present procedures, will be sure to pounce upon us with even a savager fury than before."

Of Master Rich's proffered kindness I declined for the present avail myself. Though of too upright and gentle a nature to countenance the

wickedness practised towards us, he belongeth, as I've already said, to the Episcopal party; and they, as a class, have been heard, even in this nook o' the earth, express a pretty decided opinion that we ought to be more conformable, and, seeing we cannot free, submit ourselves to the yoke those in high places seek to lay upon us. With a large share of prudence, of a *certain kind*, they cautiously avoid and shun the seeming to lend assistance to our cause, or being any way mixed up in the conflict we are now engaged in; and God forbid they should! Some of them I believe to be very worthy persons: kind Master Rich is a notable example. Yet say I again firmly, if sorrowfully, God forbid they should!

The friends now quickly decided among themselves to act according to Master Hope's suggestion; so the day after the last attack made upon my premises, four of us, beside the lad Robin Cheke, who we judged right to take likewise (I had got him to confess his fault with a becoming penitence), set out for Garston, which is scarce a two-mile walk from Kingsbridge, and situate in a very sheltered spot, quite near the waterside. Its surrounding elm trees attest, by their size and beauty, the richness of the soil they thrive in.

We had passed the first entrance gate when I perceived a gentleman and his attendants, gallantly mounted, with a hawk and several spaniels, riding

toward us, who Master Hope at once recognized as Sir William himself. Stepping hastily forward, he made a low bow, which the other gracefully returned; and seeing our brother wished speak to him, reined up his horse, and seemed encourage his communication with a courtesy I could not fail contrast with the churlishness and brutishness we are wont receive from men, how greatly his inferiors in birth and worldly station.

"Sir William," said Master Hope, earnestly, "my friends" (pointing to us a little behind) "and I have come to Garston this morning upon business of so urgent a nature, that I take the liberty of humbly craving you will be pleased give this matter a hearing. Believe me, Sir," pursued our spokesman, with some little tremulousness of voice, "our errand is to the full as grievous as 'tis pressing."

"In that case," replied the knight, blandly, "I will return to the house and go through it at once; the distance is too short for you to keep me long waiting." And before Master Hope could thank him, he had made a sign to his servants, and was riding swiftly thither.

"Said I not truly, Master Hicks, when I told ye that Sir William is one of the best and finest gentlemen in Christendom? Liken him with Squire Reynells or Master ——"

"Prithee, do no such thing," interrupted I hastily; "'tis worse than comparing gold to brass."

For while Master Hope and the knight were conversing, I narrowly observed his outward bearing. Sir William Bastarde is still in the first prime of manhood, being scarce thirty years old, and of a face and person singularly handsome and elegant. His eyes, of a deep clear hazel, are changeful in expression; methought there slept in them a fire, which, upon occasion, I doubted not, could as completely alter the character of his winning, gracious countenance, as that of a storm-cloud can obscure the smiling beauty of a summer's sky. His hair, of a pale, fair brown, he wears in the cavalier fashion of the times. His attire suiteth his station: fine costly clothing to him is as natural, becoming, and indifferent as a leathern jerkin is to a countryman, or a woollen bed-gown to a kitchen-wench. I also failed not remark an air of perfect, dignified, unconscious ease pervading his entire deportment, which spoke him one of those accustomed to have their wishes anticipated, and their requests obeyed as commands.

Upon our reaching Garston House, we found a serving-man ready waiting to conduct us to his master. I was about to follow him across the hall, when the silken rustle of a sack made me pause at its threshold, and bow, perhaps lower than Master Hope had done to Sir William, as a lady, very fair and stately—none other than the knight's nobly-born wife—swept grandly by. A mincing young

gentlewoman, holding a bright-haired child by the hand, came tripping daintily after her mistress, who for a moment let her great dark eyes, flashing beneath still darker brows, rest upon us; then, with a slight inclination of her queenly neck, passed on. There was the sparkle of diamonds in the long tresses, black as night, that, being wholly turned back from the forehead, gave me a full view of her beautiful, noble face; every feature of which, even to the delicate, sharply-cut nostril, spoke the high lineage (I know it well) from whence the lady descended. Her little son, pulling the skirt of his conductress, made the girl linger a minute, for he seemed disposed to regard us more curiously than his stately mother; and catching my eye, in a very pretty child-manner, he kissed his hand, and smiled a smile of such arch, dimpled sweetness, ere he vanished through an opposite doorway, that I, struck by his resemblance to his father, remarked to Master Hope, "Yon little pleasant branch biddeth fair prove worthy of its goodly parent stem."

We were then shown into an oak-panelled parlour, with a low, richly-wrought ceiling. The windows looked out upon a spacious pleasaunce, gay with flowers, of as marvellous richness and profusion as if they had been transplanted from the sun's own garden in the East; here and there mingled with trees, whose dark-green glossy

leaves, and fruit of a golden hue, spoke them natives of another and more southern clime; yet they had taken kindly to, and grew and flourished in, this favoured spot, not a bud or blossom of which but was worthy the plucking of the gallant Philip Sidney and his fair and favourite sister, to picture in the gentle pages of their "Arcady."

At further end of this apartment sate Sir William; he had laid his hat and fringed gloves upon a table before him, strewn with books and papers. A little distance off stood a young man, with, I conceited, a somewhat sinister cast of countenance; the inkhorn at his girdle, and the pen stuck behind his ear, spoke him a justice's clerk in waiting.

Sir William kindly requested us to be seated, an invitation of which Master Hope and myself accepted; but Enoch Trueman, Master Best, and the lad Robin could by no means think of doing any such thing; for the carven chairs and couches were covered with a damask finer than the last might dare to dream of for a wedding doublet.

"I'll not press the matter," said the knight, smiling; "having heard before that your backs are *a little* stiffish,"—all finished gentleman as he is, a slightly scornful expression flitted across his handsome features;—"and, doubtless, friends, I'm now to learn the truth of what I've known by report only, that ye're somewhat unpliant and hard to bend."

Then Master Hope, in plain, terse, simple language, and a manner which was so due an admixture of respect and confidence that I was at loss sufficiently to admire it, went direct into the marrow of the grievances we were come to complain of; namely, the wanton outrages perpetually committed upon us by our oppressors. In his own charming, artless way, he movingly depicted our sorrowful plight, and the treatment we are subject to; that the result of the distressful struggle which had taken place the day before would be for some of us a gaol, or, perhaps, exile beyond seas, was most certain, unless a counter-influence could be exerted in our behalf sufficiently powerful to restrain a man like Master Beare, aided and abetted as he was by such a magistrate as Squire Reynells.

Throughout his statement Master Hope preserved a delicate discreetness and humility which yet had not the least flavour of fawning or servility in its address; and Sir William listened with the most polite attention, though I could scarce help conceiting, at the first, with a somewhat amused expression. As Master Hope proceeded it became graver, thoughtfuller, and at length deepened into absolute sternness.

"What!" I heard him say, in an under-tone, "insult women—maltreat mere children," glancing at Robin—"and hound the sick to death! Why,

this comes up—" He did not finish the sentence; but when Master Beare's answer was repeated to the question we had put to him at my house, touching the warrant of *his* authority for the late treacherous and brutal attack upon us which I have elsewhere set down—namely, Master Beare's drawing his sword and saying "*that* was his authority"—"He shall find it otherwise, by ——," exclaimed the knight in a mood so fiery it startled us. And good Enoch Trueman, who, as I said, remained standing, cried out at once, "Hold, Sir! what is man, whose breath is in his nostrils, that you should take God's name thus hastily upon your tongue?"

"Sirrah, keep thine still," said Sir William, haughtily; but his dark kindling eyes meeting Master Trueman's all sorrowfully fixed upon him, I saw that, quick as thought, he divined the true meaning of this faithful soul's rebuke; for his gracious aspect immediately became its cloudless self again.

"This Beare, of whom ye report so ill," said he, "I will lose no time in acquainting Edward Reynells must be made comport himself differently. The honour of those who hold his Majesty's commission as justices of the peace ought to do, is concerned and requires it. I'll know what he means by allowing an affront of this sort to the bench on which, like myself, he sits as magistrate, thus pass

unnoticed. But mark," and the fine face of the speaker assumed a vexed, disturbed expression, "those miserable conventicle meetings of yours are the plea that will be set up as an ample excuse for the wrongs and insults of which you not unjustly complain. If persisted in, they assuredly must work your ruin—perhaps death." And for a short time he proceeded rapidly, in a precisely similar strain to that of which Master Rich the night before had sounded the key-note.

"I am not ignorant, though seldom in this part," continued Sir William, "of some of your places of resort. Touching those alleged meetings, my people have already told me,"—("Ah," thought I, "then we've our secret foes even in *this* household")—"that two of these spots," and his brows grew slightly compressed, "are rather near Garston itself; and ofttimes, in the lower grounds, your psalmody has reached their ears across the water."

"Ay, Sir William, to such mean shifts and sorry refuges are we driven by our adversaries," said I, feeling 'twas now my fit time to speak, for hitherto I had thought proper to remain a listener; "but upon the Rock of Saltstone, to which you allude, they may not molest us; *there* at least, when winds and tides permit, we can assemble."*

* At a low tide this rock, on which for years the persecuted Nonconformists were wont occasionally to hold their meetings, can be reached nearly dry-shod.

"Perhaps," cried the knight, gaily, "ye think ye're taking the Israelites of old for pattern in thus marching through the sea."

"And the God who smote a king and his host," replied I, gravely, "protecteth and comforteth us; for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Then I firmly but temperately proceeded to advocate those sacred and fundamental principles of religious freedom, which led to our separation from the Episcopal Church. "We reckon among our numbers," said I, "men of sterling piety and godliness, likewise high birth, and rare attainments; priests and scholars, who have lacked no worldly inducement, which their friends, or the partisans of the present Government, could hold out in order to induce them conform. He now lying dead in a chamber of my house was one of these, and preferred solitude, poverty, contempt, to a shackled, reproving conscience. We are willing, in most temporal matters—mark me, Sir, temporal—to submit ourselves 'to the powers that be,' and" (I smiled) "'obey *magistrates*;' but when they seek gain dominion over what belongs to God, and was never by Him designed for man to presume meddle with, we will resist, ay, to the death. Let the gaol and the halter do their work upon us, they cannot daunt men who, in following the command of their Divine Master, 'fear not them who at the worst can but kill the body.'"

"Yet why," said Sir William, who, while listening to me, gave answering signs of a generous sympathy, "why are you of the Non-conforming clergy, disapproving the present state of things in ecclesiastical matters, not content to remain passive, and wholly lay down your ministry?"

"Nay," answered I, "this may not be. I for one could not do it on many accounts, nor my brethren either; we fear the guilt of breaking our ordination vow, by which we have pledged ourselves to be diligent in the performance of our work, as called and chosen servants of the Lord. Many still seek our conduct, as shepherds in holy things, and not only entreat, but *claim* the continuance of our old relation toward them. If the authority of magistrates is generally set against us, we still hold ourselves under the solemnest obligations, to a higher and more sacred authority than theirs, to fulfil the duties of our ministry, though at peril of life and liberty, as long as God shall permit us. For neglecting these things the command of an earthly monarch can furnish us no just excuse: we dread above all things the doom of the unprofitable servant, that went and hid his talent in the earth."

Sir William then motioned the clerk to withdraw, which the latter, all obsequiousness, did, I noting the same covert, sinister cast in his eye I

misliked and mistrusted the moment I beheld him. We felt relieved when he was gone.

"Now," said the knight, "once, and for all, attend to what I shall communicate."

We bowed.

"My presence in this part, short, I regret, as it must be (for urgent business requires me in town by the end of the month, and may keep me there the whole winter), will, nevertheless, serve as some restraint upon those the present aspect of affairs"—here he remarked upon the late very severe statutes enacted against Nonconformists—"makes it impossible for me to chastise, as their cowardly insolence deserves to be chastised; and they *know it*, and 'tis this knowledge which makes a man of Beare's stamp thus bold. But, by my troth, he shall be kept chained to his staple whilst *I* am here. My tolerance, would I might say approval, Master Hicks," giving me his hand (we knew the full value of the former word from his lips), "after the facts you have stated, is secure; yet we must not part, without my warning you against this practice of assembling in each other's dwellings," (I, thinking on the solemn shadow then resting upon mine, sighed deeply,) "until," he added, kindly perceiving the pained expression of my face, "the Government see fit to withdraw its opposition to such meetings."

He then beckoned Robin Cheke draw near;

and Robin, with a little trepidation and shamefacedness, obeyed. A very ugly scar upon his temple attracting Sir William's attention, he made inquiry respecting it. The poor boy for a good while was forced to wear a patch over his left eye, the sight of which had been greatly obscurated by the cruel beating he got from John Lucas.

Master Robin now grew bold enow to tell his own tale; and, remembering the destruction of his best beaver, said, looking ruefully at a dismal castor he was holding in his hand, "*This*, honoured Sir, belonged to my grandfather, who's been dead these many years; and 'tis the only one my mother can afford me, in place of that I lost."

"An ancient relic, truly, for a curled pate like thine to carry," said the knight, laughing, as he laid a hand, sparkling with rings of price, upon the lad's shoulder (and a mighty pretty sight it was, methought, to see rank, wealth, and power thus gracious to weakness and poverty); the other he had thrust into a pocket of his broidered vest. I caught the shimmer of gold upon Robin's palm, and heard a rich, mellow voice say, "Take it, boy, and get thee another hat, with crown less like a church-steeple than that thou now hast;" and hastily disclaiming all thanks, while gracefully bidding us farewell, he passed out, and from a window which partially commanded the entrance to the house,

we saw him directly afterward vault into his saddle and ride off at full speed.

The serving-man who had received, now appeared to re-conduct us; in the hall was the young clerk, and the sneer upon his features he now took no pains to conceal; moreover, I observed him exchange a wink with our guide, and, at the same time, hearing a titter from another part, looked up, and in a little stone gallery espied a cluster of giggling young chamber-wenches, who were scanning our outward garb (plain enow, I grant) with an impertinence 'twas wise not notice.

After we were gotten outside the court-gate, Robin Cheke said eagerly, "Sir William has given me two guineas, Master Hicks, and I pray you take them both."

"What for?" quoth I. "If 'tis to keep the money safe, *I* have no strong box."

"Nay, Sir, that's far from my meaning. Through God's mercy, I've enow to eat and drink, but there be they that deserve much better than I, sorely pinched with hunger: this money will buy many loaves of bread."

"When Sir William so graciously gave you this gold, Robin, I heard him say, 'twas designed for a beaver in lieu of that upon your head."

"Ay, Sir," he replied, his blue eyes smiling up at mine from under its shady brim, for the sweet and trustful look of old had again come back to

them ; " I'll work hard to get me a better ; but these brave tokens (showing his guineas), e'en for sake of the grand gentleman who gave 'em me, I'd like put to the best of use, and I can think of *none better*."

" Then your own mother is a widow, and burthened with care of many children ; she is also poor."

" True," replied he, quickly ; " but there was a widow once as poor, who ' cast in all that she had' into the treasury, honoured Sir. Is it your wish to turn me from my purpose?"

" Nay, good Robin, for I believe 'tis out of the abundance of your warm young heart your mouth hath spoken ; but I wish that part this money be laid out in purchase of a hat suited to your years ; the remainder, with your mother's approval," said I (knowing what a kind soul Patty Cheke is), " divided between her and they to whom, as ye said truly, a loaf of bread will prove indeed acceptable."

While thus pleasantly conversing, the sound of something rushing along at great speed made us look backward, and what should we spy but a huge dog, known by report the whole country round, and most-times, by reason of its size and fierceness, kept close chained in the Garston kennel. Flight before such a pursuer was impossible ; yet nimbly as a squirrel the boy had darted up the nearest tree ; the other friends managed to scramble through the

hedge; and I, planting myself firmly against the trunk of the beech among whose boughs Robin was perched, folded my arms, and awaited the result of the hound's advance.

All this took place in what seemed less than a moment of time, as on he came with an arrowy swiftness, till a few paces distant the spot where I stood; and though, I confess, full of inward dread, I kept my eyes fixed steadily upon him, for I had heard—neither felt inclined treat altogether as a fable—that a man hath been able to daunt even a lion by the power of his eye; and the creature confronting me was near as big as one, of the same tawny hue, and his nervous limbs of a strength and suppleness which could have made, had he been so disposed, the springing upon and throttling me scarce the work of a minute. But whatever his impetuous advance might indicate, at the distance I have named he stopped suddenly, and save for his restless fiery eyes, which watched intently the slightest gesture or motion on my part, became still as if turned to stone. Even at a moment like this I could not help noting with admiration the symmetry and fineness of his proportions: he minded me of a dog carven by the cunning chisel of some rare sculptor.

Now, there be few of the brute kind, after a very little while, I've not found incline to grow trustful and familiar with me. As never wilfully I

worked the woe of any of these creatures, so when their dumb looks meet mine confidingly, I see how true they are to the instinct planted in their natures by a Divine Creator, that thus maketh them discern a friend who hath ofttimes shown a care and concern about their treatment, for which hard-hearted folk have ridiculed him not a little. Yet others—and my heart glows at the remembrance—have been so wrought upon by my reproofs, and moved by my exhortations, that to my certain knowledge they have eschewed bull and bear baits, and other the like cruel pastimes ever afterward. Where the Apostle speaketh of "*the whole* creation groaning and travailing in pain together," I recognize in these poor fools an important part of that creation; and He "who meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," we are expressly told by our Lord himself, noteth the fall of a sparrow.

The organs of dogs are so subtile, and their perceptions so nice, a conceit hath thereby arisen in some folk's minds that they can, in a manner, reflect on what passeth around them; and certes, my new acquaintance the hound, as he then stood, with his broad chest dilate, and his fine head a little thrown back, was, I saw, grown rather puzzled, and at loss how to proceed. It then occurred to me my best chance for safety lay

in greeting him boldly. A strange power dwelleth in the tones of the human voice over inferior and bestial natures.

"My brave dog," quoth I, speaking cheerfully, and advancing a step—though a slight rising of his back, and very low, smothered growl, made the blood pause at my heart—"'tis none but thieves or sturdy beggars *you* should be sent in chase of —nay, hardly them, to my way of thinking; but *I'm* a very honest, harmless kind of man. Come hither, friend, and examine for thyself."

"Master Hicks, ye're surely taken mad," cried Robin, among the boughs.

"Prithee, be not so fool-hardy," said another voice, a little way off; "and maybe the dog will turn aside."

The dog, however, showing no such inclination, I seated myself as composedly as I could at foot o' the tree; then he came gradually nearer, and began to smell my clothes, hands, and at length considered my features, with such a grave, careful scrutiny, that for my life I could not repress a smile. Certain it is they were not displeasing to him. He set his great, heavy paws upon my knees, and we became friends on the instant.

"Thou art indeed a noble beast, and most sagacious," exclaimed I, laying my hand now fearlessly upon his head, "in that thou scornest to worry the weak and the defenceless — though,

doubtless, unchained and sent after us for the purpose."

Looking down the road as I spoke, I spied the figures of two men, a good way off, skulking as if they wished not to be seen. Perceiving this, I ran, the dog bounding on before, till I had overtaken them. The serving-man proved one, and the other had the badge of the family on his sleeve.

"By whose orders," cried I, "did you set that dog after us?"

"Nay, master," they both exclaimed, with marks of fear as well as shame depicted in their faces; "he broke loose, and we were coming in pursuit of him."

"I believe ye not," said I. "Yet is your wicked malice defeated. Servants such as ye may well go take a lesson from a dog."

The knaves answered never a word, but hanging down their heads, returned to the house.

* * * * *

Upon the evening of the third day after dear Master Jellinger's death, we buried him in a grave, which, though far away from land of his birth and those of his kindred, yet tears of truest sorrow fell upon it, and 'twill be ofttimes visited by the gentle regrets of many who loved the peaceful sleeper there.

Ere the coffin was nailed, a sister asked me to take my farewell look of the body. *The body!* How

strange those two little words smote upon my heart! I went again into the chamber where he died; and weeping Mistress Hawes, softly and tenderly, as if she feared disturbing him, drew away the face-cloth.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," seemed writ, by a heavenly finger, upon the serene, tranquil features before me. The last words the pale, still lips had uttered appeared again whispering in my ear, but as by an angel's voice. 'Tis our intent to have them graven on the stone with which we design to mark our brother's bed of rest. At the head of it, Master Hope hath already planted a fair young maple tree.

Chapter X.

Rev. Mr. Burdwood's Orchard.

NEAR a month has passed since I made my last jotting; but for the whole of that time we've enjoyed a freedom from alarm and insult almost past belief. The furious reprisal we expected, after the shocking disturbance at the late meeting, upon such as were principally concerned therein, came not at all; our clouds of doubt and dread *seemed* to disperse, as I've seen clouds scattered in the heavens, when, to the eye, they appear charged with storm and destruction, and yet are driven away by some hidden agency that, like the gracious south wind, riseth unawares; and if men guess, they may not tell its source, and either bless silently or curse its potent influence according to the good or evil spirit which possesseth them; yet more than this they cannot do.

Master Edmund Spenser, in a certain famous

book of poesy, that in my youth (having time afore me) I read from the first line even unto the last, and was not sorry when I gat there, sayeth somewhat, if I mind rightly, about the effect produced among a company of troublous, rebel subjects, at wave of an enchanted wand; now, if I, a plain, studious, God-fearing country parson, was inclined dilate after the fantastic, allegoric fashion in which Master Spenser handles serious things, I also might, perhaps, be tempted liken the late forced stillness in these parts (though rumours are afloat of sinister portent) to a magic of the same kind; but as, when a young man, and in love to boot, I had still sufficient sense left me neither to vex my own wits, the gentlewoman's I was courting, nor those of any other folk, by essaying to rhyme idylls with a feather-headed pen, I shall certainly, at this time o' day, content myself with noting in honest, homely prose, a feature or two of the change which hath come over our condition.

First, Master Beare, for aught we can learn to the contrary, remains sulking in his house, as if he truly were become like a furred quadruped of the same name, and with growling submission was compelled to brook awhile *the chain* that binds him to *his staple*. Squire Reynells, after paying his respects at Garston, passed through Kingsbridge, on his return, as if he'd never even heard of the tumult our assemblage had caused there; and John

Lucas, though exceeding brisk and busy, and to the full intent upon and occupied in discharge of the duties connected with his pleasant calling—stocks nor pillory remaining empty from any lack of attention or assiduity on his part—seems to aroint the very shadow (leave alone the substance) of our persons, if by accident we cross each other's path.

Yet, notwithstanding this alteration in the carriage of our most inveterate foes, my mind of late hath been much perturbed and exercised; and, in sleep, my brain haunted by dreams which made me glad to wake and find they were dreams and nothing more; for the Lord doth not warn His servants now, as of old, by solemn or terrifying visions of the night. When in mood of this kind, which, to me, is thing of rare occurrence — as, God be thanked, I am far enow from having a deject cast of mind—a lusty walk into the fresh open country I've found prove a right salutary, wholesome remedy for the distemper; therefore I concluded upon doing what I'd long minded, namely, the going to see Master Burdwood at his little farm. My children followed me across the threshold of our house, and the two biggest prayed so hard to go likewise, that I consented; their mother, shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, watched us, smiling, in the porch, as long as we remained in sight.

Getting out o' the town, which it taketh not much time to do, our pleasant road lay between hedges

flush of wilding flowers still covered with dew-drops fairer than the pearls upon a queen's bodice; here and there was an opening made by a rustical stile or gate, through which might be seen glimpses of beauteous prospect beyond, and the waters of the rising tide were shimmering like burnished silver. Moreover, 'twas the harvest season: as we watched the reapers busy in the field, I dilated upon the marvellous beauty of the pastoral psalms and narratives in Holy Writ, and those where corn-fields are mentioned. I spoke to my sons of Eastern lands and customs; the stately Boaz and his men, and made them note the gracious salutation of this princely master to his servants, "The Lord be with you;" and the grateful understanding conveyed in their response, "The Lord bless thee." I pictured Ruth in her poverty, all meekly gleaning atween her rich kinsman's sheaves, till their own dark eyes 'gan softly glisten.

"Ah," cried one, "were I a jolly farmer, I'd do, my father, as that good vicar wont, I've heard you tell of, who, while he kept his glebe, had rakes made with but five teeth a-piece for his own use, that poor folk might find a plenty left behind when they came among his stooks to glean."

As the merry pair pranked on before me, they plucked them posies as they went, the elder having a knack at marking devices from leaves, blossoms, and long delicate grasses, for his mother's flowery

tapestry, which, beside being some small help to her, is a surprising pretty natural gift in one no older than he.

But the younger, who had gotten greatly ahead of us, full quick returns, his face brimming with its little news, to wit, that he had spied a nest, and would like nought better than climb up and pluck it down out of the lofty tree; yet he minded what his mother told him, and how once she chided, and shook her head; thereupon the urchin wagged his curls, and with such an arch trick of the face mimicked my wife, when she conceits she frowns, that I was fain to kiss the varlet ere I said, "Ah, child, bethink thee how grievous cruel 'tis for urchin hands like thine to tear away that curious little home, which costeth these pretty feathered songsters such nice care and skill to build and furnish to their minds. Then, parting the tender callow things from the old birds causeth them a suffering sadder than I can tell by words; the young, my son, should alway be let remain safe under a parent's downy wing, till grown strong enow to poise themselves upon their own bright pinions."

Here a sound more like the rumble of thunder than anything else interrupted our discourse, and brought us to a halt. I resolved it to proceed from coach-wheels, and as there was but one coach in the neighbourhood (of which, whenever it appeared, 'twas the entire talk and wonder) I knew *whose* it

must be. Presently the ponderous vehicle, drawn by six long-tailed horses, in a glittering harness, came in sight. Sir William Bastarde, mounted upon his favourite mare, was riding beside it, and no sooner saw me, than making a motion with his hand to the fat coachman, he rode up to the spot where I stood, and smiling at my little boys, who somewhat shily regarded the handsome stranger gentleman, the knight hastily informed me himself and his lady were then upon the first stage of their intended journey, and the rest of the household about to follow.

"If we proceed as smoothly as we've begun, which you know, Mr. Hicks," said he, laughing, "is a thing I scarce dare hope for, in little more than a week we shall find ourselves in London." Leaning down toward me, Sir William lowered his voice, and with an earnestness of manner which left no doubt in my mind of the interest he was pleased to say he took in my welfare, enjoined me, by all I valued or held dear (looking kindly toward my children, whose admiring eyes were riveted upon the fine coach, rich-liveried servants, and prancing horses, a little way off), to pursue a certain line of conduct. What that certain line of conduct was, I need not here set down; suffice it to hint, a high ecclesiastical personage had thought proper to cause be laid before his Majesty's Privy Council "A complaint concerning the—" Sir William paused, and I perceived the colour deepen on his cheek.

"The protection vouchsafed us, since your coming into this part," said I, completing the sentence.

He made an impatient gesture of assent, yet the next moment disclaimed eagerly the doing aught in our behalf, "Save that," cried he, his lip curling as he spoke, "which, could I have acted otherwise, had made me unworthy the trust I hold; ay—pardon my pride, 'tis honest—the blood which bounds untainted in my veins."

"God grant that no ill after-consequences, Sir William, may accrue to yourself from the just, the generous spirit which has thus made you interpose between our persecutors and ourselves."

"Nay, 'tis little I need care—some slight censure, perhaps, from a royal quarter, which I shall bear as lightly as I do the feather in my hat; but, friend, listen to my parting word of counsel—be *you* right cautious for the future."

"My future," replied I, "is as the Lord shall direct; it lies with Him; all our 'times are in His hand.'"

While this converse was going on, the coachman, with the other servants clustered behind the coach, eyed askance from their respective seats the poor man, in his thread-bare suit of rusty black, their worshipful master thus talked with as an equal; the very horses seemed toss their heads and arch their shining necks disdainfully; my lady's little foot-page sate watchful on the wide, low door-step

of the coach; and soon my lady herself, in her velvet hood, looked out to see what the cause of this delay might be. Yet her face (about the finest I ever beheld) grew somewhat clouded when, after returning my obeisance, she sunk back upon her seat. The pert nose of the young waiting gentlewoman sitting opposite her mistress was also discernible, as well as the dim outline of what I concluded a chaplain's averted shovel-hat, in another corner of the roomy vehicle. Then, forsooth, a favourite monkey the damsel was holding in a silver chain must needs show his small, dark, wizened visage, making at the same time a little mowing grimace, whereat the children falling into an ecstacy of laughter, the chain of the ape was quickly pulled, and in its stead appeared the cherub head of the little heir, his peach-like cheeks all dimpled with responsive mirth; but a signal to move being given, the jerk flung him down among my lady's silken cushions, and the gorgeous equipage proceeded on its way. Sir William, with a countenance in which both regret and commiseration were strongly expressed, cordially extended his hand; I pressed it warmly, and may the prayer to Heaven which then sprung from my heart to my lips, rest like a blessing upon him and his ancient house for many a prosperous generation to come!

After walking briskly several paces, I turned to take a farewell look, just as the four gilt balls on

the roof of the coach were slowly disappearing adown a steep hill behind us; and a feeling, pretty near akin to a wight's who, crossing a deep, foaming torrent, sees the plank on which his foot resteth shiver and part beneath him, oppressed my soul with sadness. Not long afterward, the clack of a mill rising faintly to the ear from a vale below broke the thread of my reflections, and soon we reached a low, one-arched bridge, overhung with trees. Hard by was the miller's house, a place content itself might love to dwell in, and in the porch, her distaff in her hand, a comely red-cheeked dame was sitting, who, nodding to my little sons, cheerily gave me good-day, and asked us step within, rest our legs a bit, and taste their home-brewed ale.

While the miller's wife was speaking, the miller himself appeared, looking just what he is, a right goodly sample of jocund health and plenty; his honest face round and full as a harvest moon, and shoulders of a breadth to match. Each living creature around did convey a sense of the same comfortable ease and abundance, from the cock a-crowing and strutting with his dozen wives before the door, to the lazy house-dog basking i' the sun, who half opening his blinking eyes, surveyed us mildly, and again shut them for the flies to walk over at their pleasure.

I had some ado to get away from the proffered

kindness of the hearty miller and his dame; but time allowed not this pleasant loitering by the way. Sure, thought I, 'tis none save envious niggard churls would grudge such bounteous souls the good a gracious Providence delights thus shower upon them.

Then we struck into a path, which brought us to the keep of a very ancient castle, shattered by the Parliament forces in the late civil strife; its turrets are fallen, and the courts overgrown with grass, which thirty years agone echoed the tramp of the sentinel, and the neigh of the war-horse. At no distant date, I foresee, few traces of these old walls will remain. I lingered a little space upon the green, where the feudal lords of the place wont play at bowls and other pastimes, the boys all gleefully watching a hare dart across and on to the sunny glade beyond; but, alack! at very short distance from the spot stood a grim reminder of the barons of yore in the castle gibbet-tree, from whose black mouldered cross-beam many a one had quivered in his death-throes at the frown of his lord.

All about the fortress seemed decayed and desolate; nought living discerned I near us, save a flock of sheep feeding quietly in an adjoining field. Presently I spied a couple of crows flying about, who, in very important manner, appeared to be calling their gossips. At sound of their hoarse

voices an ugly suspicion seized me; they driving downward, I lost sight of them. There was a gap in the hedge in that direction; I went thither, looked through, and lo! the pitiful spectacle met my eyes of a poor harmless sheep lying upon her back, with this pair of carrion, in their funeral feather cloaks, perched at her head, just a-making up their minds to begin their cruel work. I cried out so loud that I scared 'em. My children also came running up, and the elder, like a brave little man as he is, tugged and strove to help me; while the younger gave the biggest of the crows (and I could scarce chide him for it) so shrewd a hit with a stone, that he and his black neighbour were glad to flap their wings at more convenient distance, and go sailing off in quest of other prey, while we gat the poor innocent fool of a sheep safe upon her legs again.

This exploit, which joyed us much, being excellently done, we trod the last mile all the more briskly; and then, peeping out amid the surrounding orchard trees, the brown thatch-roof of Master Burdwood's cottage, with its gable chimney sending up a wreath of smoke in the clear, warm air, came like a pretty picture before our eyes. The land, in that part of the country where he liveth, during the spring-time o' the year, is gay as gay can be with apple blossoms; for these trees affect the soil so well they yield fruit there in measure and abundance

scarce to be credited elsewhere ; but now, the summer nearing its close, their heavy boughs were drooping beneath a load of rich and ripening rosy treasures for the autumn gathering.

At sound of our footsteps, a little wiry cur 'gan bark so loud I'd thought of clapping him in my pocket to still his pother. The noise he made brought out none other than Master Burdwood himself, followed by his wife and daughters—the sons were in the field. They welcomed me as if I'd brought some exceeding choice and much-desired thing, instead of two little appetites beside my own, and all three whetted to an unusual degree of keenness by the fresh, pure air and healthful exercise of the morning. Right glad we were to find ourselves in their humble kitchen, where the sunbeams, darting through the woodbine trained against the lattice window, made a fanciful kind of chequer over the clean huckaback cloth one of the girls was busy laying upon the long shining oaken table. They set before us sweet wholesome bread, cheese, and pasty, flanked by a pewter tankard kept bright as silver, and filled with cider a prince might drink of and commend, beside a bowl of fragrant milk, and dish of honey-comb, for the children. Master Burdwood then said grace, and 'tis better to hear him do so over a crust and salad than many a plethoric bishop preach.

Mistress Burdwood heaped our trenchers with

the hand of a gentlewoman who delighteth (as she oft doth) to feed the hungry. At her desire, when her husband settled in this farm, having some means left, he purchased a few cows, and she and her daughters learned greatly to excel in dairy thrift; ay, more, I've heard, than most of their neighbours, who've been nought save homespun housewives all their days, with scarce a thought, or wish, beyond their pots and pans. Yet the *once* white, taper, jewelled fingers of Mistress Burdwood, that do now apply themselves with such admirable skill and diligence to the plainest, rustical, house-wife matters, in past times touched the lute rarely.

The girls too drew their joint-stools near, and gently caressed my little sons, for which the youngest gat her round cap twitched off slily from the bright curls it but half did cover. She is a marvellously pretty child, and while her mother smoothed the golden locks a-shining in the sun, I trusted the sickle of the reaper might not be laid untimely at stem of so sweet a budding flower. For though my brother has still several children left, death hath cropped others scarce less lovely, and ah! scarce less fragile, than the blossoms on his fruit-trees before a frost in spring.

"Now," said Master Burdwood, when our repast was ended, "I will have you to my orchard. Under a favourite tree of mine there, my good

sons made a bench for me, which upon occasion serveth for my pulpit also, and folk of the nearest hamlets and villages flock largely thither to hear God's message delivered to them. We, too, have not been free from alarms and commotions, though falling short your worries and dispersals at Kingsbridge. If our arch foe, Master Beare, is ever made magistrate, I hear he threatens me a first visit in that capacity."

"Doubtless, he'll keep his evil word."

As we were going out o' the house, I observed at little distance a hen spreading abroad her soft, speckled wings, and covering her brood with them, in a way that served bring to mind in a very lively manner the tender image by which our Lord showed what His love to His ancient people would have been had they not rejected it; also a nearly-forgotten passage in my own life. It was as follows:—

When I had possession of a vicar's house, glebe, and other things, tending, perhaps, to make *this* life too desirable, my wife took pleasure in the rearing and feeding divers choice sort of fowl. Now a certain worldly-wise gentleman, a neighbour of ours, after I'd announced my intention to give up my living, made it his business to expostulate with me thereon.

"Master Hicks," quoth he, "if ye prove thus humorsome, and persist in refusing to conform,

having a family like to be growing larger, what will ye do?"

"*Do?*" cried I, and looked around me for a fitting emblem to illustrate that which I was going to say; and lo! close by was a brave hen, just such another as that I noted at Master Burdwood's door, calling to her young—and a goodly number the poor, fond, anxious thing had to care for. "Master Silver," said I, pointing to her, "if I've as many children as yonder hen has chickens, I question not but God will provide for them all."

And truly my gracious Heavenly Father has done what, from the beginning of my temporal troubles, grace was given me to believe without doubting He would, yea, will do to the end.

"Brother," said Master Burdwood, as we seated ourselves upon the rustical bench he spake of, in the midst of his pleasant and delightsome orchard, "I have felt much of the Lord's presence in this spot, yea, preached with more unction under these boughs than I've done beneath the lofty arches of a cathedral roof."

"God's service," replied I, "hath ofttimes appeared to me likewise, when preaching i' the open air, sweeter, ay, solemner, with the hills around me for walls, the sky above for roof, than in any temple builded by the hand of man. And how fervent the spirit, which bringeth our hearers

together!—earthly punishment only seemeth to make the larger number bind themselves all the more closely to the holy cause for which they suffer."

'Tis for the dearest, sacredest rights of humankind we and they are striving, Master Hicks; and if our lot be cast where force takes place of laws, and the worshipping our Maker in other ways than the King wills appear counted a crime we may hereafter, perhaps, expiate on the gallows, have we not already proved by experience how the Lord can strengthen us for this contest? I reckon we play a more important part in our Master's service, now we ofttimes scarce know how to live, than when we were snugly ensconced in our good livings."

"Ay, and are at peace with our own conscience, my brother. When thou and I gave up our worldly all, we trusted in God's promises, and hath He ever since failed support us by His providence?"

"How truthful is thine observe!" said Master Burdwood; and so bright a smile broke over his features that I likened it to what Master Spenser, in a stanza of his long-winded poem, prettily enow calleth, "sunshine in a shady place." "But I meet with other kind of disturbance, Master Hicks," quoth he, "in a quarter ye little wot of. Ye know there are pretty many of the persons called Quakers a-settling themselves in these parts."

"Ay, we've two or three families of 'em newly come to Kingsbridge. They seem affect the place,

and shrewder hands at making an honest bargain, the townsfolk declare they never in all their lives met before. Of a truth, in worldly matters, the Quakers do appear to have the wisdom of the serpent."

"Yet are they not quite so harmless as doves. What think ye of these worthy folk (for good to the heart's core, despite some of their megrims, I believe 'em) a-coming when I am preaching on purpose to hold a wordy kind of disputation with me at the end o' my sermon? I freely own the sight of their beavers under my apple-trees is to me far enow from a pleasant one."

"If such their errand, I can readily conceit it, though the wearers of 'em be excellent souls in the main, and like ourselves they suffer much —ay, in ways, too, that we are free of—for maintaining steadfastly what they believe right, according to God's word; braver confessors for the glorious truth, that the Lord assumes to himself the dominion of conscience, and therefore all punishment for conscience sake is contrary to His word, shall ye find nowhere than among the Quakers."

"And greatly do I honour and esteem these our friends for their righteous firmness in this matter. They have sterling stuff in 'em, my brother; moreover, being devout believers in the Holy Scriptures, as 'given by inspiration of God,' they are sound i' the faith, though their chief doctrine, namely, a

fuller recognition of the direct moving and teaching of the Spirit than other believers care so largely subscribe to, *I* (not without some small reason) consider in a certain degree erroneous, for never can I be brought to think their feet guided hither by the Divine Spirit into this my orchard—as they stiffly contend they are — to ruffle and disturb mine, while engaged in the work I humbly hold myself appointed to by the Lord; and if these our over-familiar neighbours find me not out of doors, without as much as a 'By thy leave, friend,' they'll lift the latch, and come straight into the midst of my house—ay, when we're at prayers, or meals—and taking careful note of what they see and hear (for from under their hats look forth eyes as keen, observant, and discerning as ever yet were set in human heads), after I've ended my praying, or begun my dining, they'll maybe ply us round—wife, children, or any others present—with the strangest, searchingest questions ye can conceit. And mark, these folk, while sucking the very marrow of your thoughts, are extreme sparing o' the change they give that way in return. If ye ask the merest Quaker stripling such simple question as, 'What of the clock 'tis?' he'll pick his words well over afore he give ye a cautious answer. Now and then, I confess, I wax somewhat warm with, and make tartish answers to, these our self-appointed catechisers."

"How bear they having inquiry made into *their own* personal concerns?" quoth I, smiling.

"The horns of a snail," said Master Burdwood, "are not tenderer to the touch of a rude finger, nor doth he shrink more quickly into the house upon his back, than do they retreat within themselves, if reprisal of this sort be tried."

"I once heard Master Corbett's friends tell a tale about these worthy people and Bishop Gunning, and how they worsted the bishop."

"Let's have it, Master Hicks."

"Well, ye must know, his lordship, out of his hot-headed zeal, must needs give a challenge to the Independents, Baptists, and *Quakers*, for the holding a public disputation; and when the time appointed was come, the bishop in much state took the pulpit, with a great pile of books beside him, and after his sort, began to fire away very fiercely at the first (for schism and rebellion were the ball he shot), and they let him say out his say, without much troubling themselves to answer. Thus having spent his heat, he treated the Baptists civiller; but on the third day of the disputation up came the Quakers, and at sight of their beavers, set as firm upon their pates as if they grew there, and which none save a man-at-arms might remove, Bishop Gunning, forgetful that 'a bishop must be no brawler,' fell a-railing. Lo! never man quicklier found out his mistake, for they paid him back in his own coin, and with interest too,

soon letting him know they should neither be gravelled by his books, nor confounded by his tongue, till at length, in sore dismay and confusion, he was forced leave the pulpit; and as he passed 'em, one boldly plucked his lawn sleeve, crying, 'The hireling fleeth! the hireling fleeth!' Yea, they followed him home, and right glad was my lord bishop to find himself inside his palace gates again; and never after could he abide sound of holding further controversy with these folk."

"Good," said Master Burdwood, laughing, "and few, I trow, there be, either among bishops or lay men, who can gravel a Quaker in argument, or anything else."

With regard to another communication I made, of a very different nature, Master Burdwood remarked, "Depend on't, the bishops will do their best, or rather worst, to hinder the King from showing his Nonconformist subjects that justice which, some ten years since, he was ready to promise, when the ministers of our body joyfully attended him through London upon his restoration. Poor old Master Arthur Jackson! I conceit I see that good man presenting the rich Bible to his sovereign, and hear the grateful acclamations which burst forth, when, with a princely grace, the King, taking the holy Gospel in his hand, told them 'it should be the rule of his *actions*.'"

Chapter XI.

Talk in Rev. Mr. Burdwood's Orchard concluded by an Account of the Mischief the Sun wrought for Christopher Hart.

"BUT, Master Burdwood," exclaimed I, hurriedly, after a pause of several minutes, during which I had been cogitating too ruefully upon his last observes to give a glance at his countenance, "*what* is this which has come over you?" for Master Burdwood's face had grown pale as the face of a statue, and the drops were gathered in beads upon his high forehead, knitted like that of him who endureth sharp agony, while both his hands were tightly clenched. "I will run to the house," cried I, in great alarm. Hereupon he shook his head, and made a gesture so expressive of disapproval that I remained where I was, and after an anxious watch of some duration on my part, his countenance gradually resumed its wonted hue and expression.

"Thou hast read of the rack, brother," said he, faintly trying to smile; "methinks it could scarce

give dreadfuller wrenches than those I am now ofttimes called to suffer." And he proceeded describe to my amazed and deeply-affected self the progress of a cruel hidden malady, that baffles science find a cure for, from which he hath, hitherto, been an unsuspected sufferer, its fangs having been slow a-striking themselves in his strong, healthful, finely-made frame.

"Yet art thou, my brother," at length groaned I, "in the hand of Him who doth not willingly afflict the children of men."

"True, Master Hicks, I am; and if it be God's pleasure that ere long I must become fit for no work save the *work of suffering*, I submit—I submit. I have lost children, and estate, lastly health; yet can I say, with holy joy, with devout thankfulness, He is my God still, yea, more so than ever. And," continued he, his old smile breaking again like sunlight over his features, "wot ye not, Master Hicks, 'tis better to be pickled in brine than let rot in honey?"

"Ay, dear friend," said I, "and the Lord ofttimes seasons His chosen vessels with the water of affliction, ere He pours into them the wine of His glory."

"And if," pursued Master Burdwood, "I handle the spade less, I use the pen more. What dost think of 'Heart's-Ease,' for title of a book I project writing? And I've begun another, named, 'Helps

for Faith in Times of Affliction,' purely from my own personal experience."

"I pray ye may be allowed fully to complete it. 'Twill prove, I doubt not, a work of sterling value to the church; and, speaking of books, I myself am, at spare hours, engaged in the writing a treatise, which I humbly trust may do some little good. Ye know how roughly divers parts of it have been already handled."* (Master Burdwood nodded. He was now, in appearance, quite come round again to his wonted pleasant, cheerful self.) "And, moreover, of late it hath taken me in the mind to keep (by means of a few unstudied jottings, which, may be, you will think poor and trivial) some slight record of things, just as they pass before my own eyes, or I hear them reported by folk of credit in Kingsbridge."

"A little town," interrupted Master Burdwood, "which tidings from afar reach just when the rest o' the world have clean forgot them—where a post windeth his horn scarce oftener than once a month, and then it causeth such commotion in the place that the very dogs in the street partake thereof, and bark accordingly; while he who getteth a 'News-book,' or a broad-sheet of 'The Public Intelligencer,' is forced to read the same aloud to they who cannot, which includes near half

* See Chapter III.

the parish—where the delivery of parcels and the like by the carriers is so uncertain and distressful that Master Crispin deemed it prudent to send a man and horse express with his letter, touching the interment of Master Hughes."

"Pretty true in the main," said I, smiling; "yet is the picture a little overcharged. For this town, with its part royal appellation, to wit, that of *King*, once set the admirable scholar ye just mentioned a-thinking and searching the true origin and meaning thereof; and he made a choice Latin transcript of a certain tradition he believed closely connected with the same, which near nine hundred years had been floating adown the stream of time, that to some folk flows so gently, it scarce seems flow at all in Kingsbridge. I laid it carefully, along with other of my most prized papers, in the small cedar chest, which I delivered into the worthy hands of Master Hawes, the bachelor, for safer keeping than, alack! my own poor house now affordeth."

"I know it well, Master Hicks, and 'tis a flower of heavenly poesy well worth preserving in a good man's memory."

"But that which I spake of anon, Master Burdwood, was some simple jottings of *our* every-day life, made when I am i' the vein; alack, they grow so sorrowful 'tis not often I've the heart for it." Then I plucked out of my pocket, and showed him, this my note-book.

"The notion is not amiss," replied Master Burdwood, turning over its leaves; "for the prattling with a pen giveth a man a curt, easy, natural mode of expression. Yet, pardon me for reminding you, good brother, that the pen needs even straiter check than the tongue; the latter is capable of giving wounds, such as time, who healeth most things, fails to heal. Yet is it neither to be so feared in its mischief, nor so deadly in its poison, as the former. When a thing is set down in *writing*, it assumeth a degree of certainty which may be as lasting in its effects for evil as for good."

"I design this little memoriam of '*Troublous Times*' for my children—perhaps theirs after them," quoth I.

"Yet thou knowest not in years to come whose hands it may happen fall into."

"True; and if of a curious turn, I conceit they who get will wish"—and I laughed at my thought—"John Hicks had learned write a less evil hand; for that which long use hath made most familiar to me is crooked enow to decipher."

"Ye speak truth; thy written characters are so perverse, even I who know and love thee so well can scarce make 'em out."

"Whereas some folk—my eldest son will be one of those—touch their paper or vellum with strokes so clear, and true, and fine, that a quill handled by a fay's fingers could scarce do it more daintily.

We've each our respective gifts and graces, and for certain that of writing straight and plain is not among the number of mine; but I pray God that, as we are enjoined to *speak* 'the truth in love,' I shall be careful, dear brother, to mind your injunction the other way."

"Look yonder," said Master Burdwood, pointing to a distant part of his orchard, "ye've a lively fancy, Master Hicks; now isn't that a pretty picture under the boughs of my famous golden pippin?"

"Ay, as e'er a limner could desire to paint," cried I, delightedly; for his own blooming daughters, with my sons, were there seated upon the grass, and one of the young maidens had her apron full of flowers, which the biggest of the boys was helping her sort, and tie up in choicest posies; the elder of the fair girls, half reclining on her elbow, held in one hand an open book; and the little, prick-eared, brown dog, that snarled so saucily at our entrance, had thrust his black nose under her arm, and setting a paw upon the page, seemed, by the grave twinkling of his eyes, near as intent upon the reading it as she.

"My good children," said Master Burdwood, "have been to me truly 'a heritage of the Lord.' Ye know," continued he, with emotion, "how death hath been commissioned by the Lord to crop the sweetest of my buds, and choose the firstlings

of my flock, taken to heaven in the morning of their day; they yet left me such blessed hope in their departure, that with very little outward discomposure I was enabled preach the funeral sermon of each, though the parting with them seemed to my poor wife and myself just like the severance of our own heart-strings. Master Hicks, I pray *much* for my children, and I know you do the same for yours."

"Ah, my very soul," quoth I, fervently, "at these seasons seemeth to resolve itself into the prayer I offer on *their* behalf."

"I cannot," pursued Master Burdwood, "expect my sons—they will be come from the field against we return to the house, and ye'll see what tall, comely youths they are grown—to remain content, nor is it fitting they should, with tilling my poor rental of ground: they have learnt them dialling and land-surveying, though right diligent in attending their plough and cattle. These things, Master Hicks, which appear plain and of ordinary account, neither debase nor unfit a person for what is high and noble."

"To my way of thinking, Master Burdwood, they appear to shed all the greater lustre and dignity upon him, if it is the Lord's will that hereafter his estate shall become an exalted one; for have we not in our time seen hands which grudged not their farm labour—hands that knew full well how to use a spade, or drive a coulter—hold the

reins of power in this kingdom majestically, and administer her government with a firmness and wisdom which made the nation prosperous at home, feared and respected abroad?"

"The late Lord Protector, Master Hicks, was a ruler of God's own making; in truth, a *sovereign* man." Then, after a solemn pause, which I felt no inclination to break, he resumed, "Let us discourse upon a humbler subject. My sons (as I was saying) will, ere long, leave me; nor can I, in justice to them, withhold my consent. They desire to build homes, and get farms, in that New World, I once, along with several other brethren in misfortune, was upon the point of embarking for. Yet, in my particular case, Providence decreed it should be otherwise, and constrained me stay behind."

"Ah, Master Burdwood, thousands of miles across the sea, in New England, the brave and godly sons and daughters of the Old (they whom tyrants banish, and she casteth out as unworthy to be her children) can dwell in safety, under the shadow of their own vine and fig-tree, and have laid the foundation of a free and gracious polity. When reflecting, as I ofttimes do, upon my poor family's possible future, the same thing your sons (by the blessing of God) purpose achieving presents itself before me in an increasingly desirable point of view."

"Nor can I marvel thereat, Master Hicks; but

if, dear friend, true brother, this come to pass, may the Lord grant that ye and your wife be permitted go with your children to that new land of promise. For me, He has willed otherwise. I must submit to final earthly separation from most of mine; and I will also confess to you a dread which weigheth heavy on my soul; in addition to these discords which harass our country, I greatly fear the spread and increase of Popery. There is a prince very near the throne, who, if he ever wear the crown, all that know aught of him say, will go as far as God shall permit in again bringing this deadly evil upon the kingdom. Ah! sooner than son or daughter of mine should become miserable apostates from the saving truths of the Reformed faith, and perhaps hold a candle to a Popish priest, would I see the last"—and his voice sounded sadly—"in their winding-sheets. But I know, Master Hicks," said he, some minutes afterward, in a cheerfuller tone, "those owlet-nests, convents, abbeys, and the like, you, though far as myself from wishing to see reared up again, to become the pest-spots of this fair realm, yet, nevertheless, when opportunity serves, dearly like inspect their remains, and ruminate therein."

"Of a truth, Master Burdwood, 'tis no discredit to my taste, for their founders had rare art in mating strength with beauty. I remember 'twas one of dear Master Jellinger's conceits that the

abbot architects of yore were true poets, 'as their works in stone,' quoth he, 'to this day testify.' Now, to my mind, the brains of these 'cute monks were likewise stored with notions, more suited to the eating and drinking world they lived in than the airy imaginings of poesy liketh well admit; for had they not eyes as quick as they were careful in choosing them sites among the best and fattest portions of the land, where the meadows are greenest, the woods fairest, and the streams and rivers teemed with fish, that promised comfortably for the fasts o' Lent?"

"Ay, Master Hicks, those monks were gluttonous livers, and noted for making 'gods of their bellies.'"

"But to my belief there are good men, and for certain good women," cried I, "according to the divine light they have been permitted to receive, of every creed—nay, frown not, my brother—of every creed, clime, and tongue, upon the face of the whole earth."

"I will also tell *you* a thing, Master Hicks, bearing on this point we're a-discussing, the which I've pondered over much, and sorrowfully, under my orchard-trees; to wit, that, whenever any religious body—I except ours no more than another—holds exclusive or preponderating influence in the State, intolerance, which is the sure forerunner of what's even worse, creepeth in directly."

"Ay," said I, "and how many Episcopalians at this very time, who profess abhor the flames of Smithfield, would yet, to judge by their actions, serve *us* not much better; if they don't burn, they hang, fine, imprison, and exile without mercy. Master Beare, that calleth himself so stanch a Churchman, and hath the words, 'Fear God, and honour the King,' pat enow upon his tongue, lacketh but the power to be a match for any Papist, dead or alive, in violence and cruelty."

"True, and I think, Master Hicks, I can make narration of a circumstance which took place not quite three years agone. Did ye ever hear of the mischief the sun wrought for Christopher Hart?"

"Somewhat in parcels, I may, of what seemed to me so like an idle tale that I gave it little heed."

"Nay, 'tis worth remembering; 'tis sober truth, depend on't, every word. Before we leave this bench, I'll tell ye the particulars."

"Do," said I. And, in my opinion, the relation of Master Burdwood was so curious, and out of the common course of human affairs, that I shall transcribe it, as near as I can, in his own words:—

"Christopher Hart was a farmer. Descended from ancestors who were Puritans, he himself held much the same religious opinions, though occasionally an attendant at his parish church; and upon the day set apart by the Church of England to commemorate the beheading of King Charles I., Master

Hart was—woe the day for him!—seated in one of its pews. He appeared not take the slightest notice of the allusions in the service to the defunct monarch and Royal Martyr, till it so fell out that the officiating minister, in the height of his exordium from the pulpit, thought fit exclaim, 'And never since, on this day, has the sun been known to shine.' As the words passed his lips, the sun, which had before been slightly overcast, streamed through the church windows with such a flood of dazzling brightness that the small eyes of the old vicar blinked again in the sudden blaze of golden light, which, after playing with his own round cheeks and ruby nose, proceeded to illuminate the monument of a knight who had fought in the Wars of the Roses, and nobody could tell how many wars beside, whose fierce visage seemed to frown more darkly still, whilst the clasped gauntleted hands appeared raised as if in solemn deprecation of the monstrous fable to which priestly tongue had given utterance.

"But at this very moment there was a living face which looked near as forbidding in real flesh and blood as did the grim old warrior's in stone, for Master Christopher Hart had risen to his feet, and, with a voice that made the aisles resound again, shouted forth—'By thy own red nose, thou speakest false! The sun *not* shine on this day more than any other!—why, man, he is now shining straight in thy very face to confound thee.'

"The parson dropped his book; the lord of the manor, Squire Dacres, started up in his great crimson-cushioned pew, with an oath; whilst Madam Dacres spread her fan, lest her eyes should be extinguished by glancing toward such a monster. Even the curls on the periwig of their little buff-breeched heir-apparent, as well as those lovelier ones under cap of finest Flanders upon the head of his pretty sister, seemed to rise and stand on end with horror at such a sacrilegious outrage.

"What followed may not easily be imagined. Master Hart had walked into that church a wealthy, thriving man: he was dragged out as a felon, an object for Episcopal vengeance to pursue. For presuming within *sacred* precincts to become a fearless witness in the cause of truth, he was persecuted with the most merciless severity, for they said he had 'brawled' in the church; therefore, he was fined so heavily that his wife and children were made homeless, and himself cast into prison. Nevertheless, the captive's spirits are wonderfully kept up; he there manageth to pursue some handicraft, which, with the aid rendered by a few kind Christian souls —whose timid natures, I've heard, secretly blame his more intrepid one for being so deficient in all worldly prudence—he and his family have, hitherto, been kept from starvation. It must also be borne in mind, that most of they who sympathise with and pity his misfortunes, while ministering to his neces-

sities, keep certain rankling memories in their own hearts of perhaps a grandfather publicly scourged and branded, an uncle nailed to the pillory, and other kinsfolk minus their ears.

"I do not think the Lord will permit Christopher Hart to die in prison, though I fear the best years of his life will be spent there, neither have his children been permitted beg their bread; the elder ones have gone out to America, are flourishing there, and bid fair to prove worthy the parent stock; and as for his wife, no language I am master of can fitly tell what that brave soul has struggled through for love of her husband and family. If man is created only 'a little lower than the angels,' 'tis my belief, Master Hicks, some women (Kit Hart's wife is of their number) are, in adversity, equal to the angels themselves."

"I doubt it not," responded I, warmly; "and thine are not the idle fancies of a mere brain-sick romancer, but the words of truth and soberness."

"The temper of the prisoner's own mind," said Master Burdwood, "is also exceedingly cheerful and composed; he hath turned the following little song, and ofttimes, like a caged lark, singeth it whilst at his work:—

"Bright sun, betwixt my prison bars
I love thy smile to see;
'Twas strange those golden beams of thine
Should sorrow make for me.

"Whilst cooped within these walls of stone,
I muse, and work, and sing;
Perchance in bonds do ofttimes feel
More joyous than a king;—

"For certes than a king forsworn—
I who, from early youth,
Have counted crowns but sorry gauds
Without that jewel—truth.

"Let timid hearts school prudent tongues
Their coward peace to hold;
Lord grant that, in her sacred cause,
I steadfast prove as bold.

"Then smile betwixt those bars, bright sun,
My breast forebodes no ill;
For a clear consoience maketh there
A brighter sunshine still."

Chapter XII.

John Lucas falls Sick—The Rock and the Hill Gatherings—Master Beare is made Magistrate—A Last Dying Speech.

AS late as Wednesday week, 'twas reported in Kingsbridge that John Lucas had fallen sick, and his distemper proved itself to be a spotted fever of the worst kind. On hearing my poor stricken foe's condition, the first wish of my heart was that I could do him some good service. Remembering also the injunction of our Lord, to "pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you," I made instant and very earnest supplication at a throne of grace on his behalf. Those we *love* 'tis easy and natural enow to bear upon our hearts in prayer. We wrestle fervently, and weary not, in imploring that blessings may descend upon them. Yet did Christ set us other example still to follow. While even in His death-agony, He craved pardon for they who scourged, and mocked, and pierced Him.

Touching our own affairs at this period, though their posture remained pretty much the same as when I made my last jottings: we determined not risk the assembling ourselves again together, either in or very near the town; but upon the afterpart of the day I've named, we agreed to hold a meeting on the Rock Saltstone,* which lieth nearly in the midst of the arm o' the sea that washeth the beach at foot of the town of Kingsbridge. No parish has been able to make out a claim to this poor islet, now *the only spot* where, according to the present cruel laws, we feel sure our enemies may neither surround nor seize us. God's eye regards that speck amid the waters, for hitherto He hath preserved it inviolate from their malice. The friends in the adjacent places round—opportunity serving—likewise meet us there; as the top of this rock, at ebb o' the tide, presenteth a level platform near five score feet in length, and full half as much in breadth, so that a goodly number of worshippers can stand thereon, and have blessed breathing of prayer, and be refreshed with spiritual exhortation, for which their thirsty souls pant, even "as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks."

A certain godly minister, never in these parts before, had come quite unexpected to my house, when it wanted scarce four hours of that appointed

* See Chapter IX.

for the meeting; and though this good man had the preceding day journeyed upward of fifty mile, and most of it afoot, he no sooner learned our purpose than he decided upon making one of our number; whereat we greatly rejoiced, seeing Master Habakkuk Brande is a person of no common rank or likelihood; the exceeding plain cut of his habit, made after the old Puritan manner, shows how little he careth, in mere apparelling of the outward man, for this world's fashions and vanities.

A slight rest and refreshment we, in a sort, forced him to take.

"I know not," quoth he, "what 'tis to be either foot-sore or weary in *my* Master's service; yea, 'tis so brave a service, that never have I ceased rejoice since first the Holy Spirit called me to enter it as a preacher of the truth. I pray to be kept from e'er becoming like certain professors, who affect know much, and ofttimes say much, yet *do* as little as ever they can. God forbid I should pick holes in other men's coats, yet with blushing cheeks must I tell you, Master Hicks, there be some slothful, lazy workers in our Master's vineyard—ay, ministers ne'er a whit the worse for years, and with very sound inwards, yet list they neither preaching, nor expounding, more than can be barely helped; to such I say, Brethren, ye seem to fear lest ye should do too much for Him from whose free sovereign grace ye yourselves have received everything; a faith that

shirketh labour cannot be a saving faith; ye may count yourselves 'stablished in the faith' and 'rooted and built up' in the Lord, yet is not the fruit of a tree more visible than its root? And upon this point be admonished by His own words: 'For every tree is known by his own fruit.'"

And, of a truth, Master Brande himself is one whose feet are "shod with the preparation of the Gospel." Moreover, he is steeled with a courage which maketh him confess to no fear, save the fear of offending God. Endowed with extraordinary sanctity, as well as activity of spirit, he will wear, but never rust out in the heavenly work he is engaged in; which hath been owned and blessed in wonderfully abundant measure. On receiving such an honoured guest, we seemed as they who entertain an angel—I cannot exactly say unawares, for my wife and I soon discovered the choiceness of his quality.

When the time was come for us to set forth, I conducted Master Brande through some fields skirting the water, till we arrived at a well-known creek o' the shore, where a boat full of brethren and sisters lay to, awaiting us; and the rowers—Master Hope was one—plied their oars so lustily, in less than an hour we reached the Rock of Saltstone. Many persons — Master Burdwood and his tall handsome sons among them—had already assembled, and were chanting the 46th Psalm. As we

stepped upon the little tide-washed islet, I said to Master Brande,—

"This spot, my brother, is exceeding dear to the Lord's people hereabouts. 'Prayer, and strong crying with tears,' have gone up from hence, which He 'whose throne is in the heavens,' hath bowed down to listen to: His hand hath beckoned to Himself some of the dear friends who wont to worship with us, and they now behold 'the King in His beauty.'"

"Yet are they still your brethren," replied Master Brande, "for the church of Christ above is knit in a very close communion with His church below."

"A reflection to my mind," quoth I, "fraught with the heavenliest of consolation."

Beside the folk gathered upon the rock, no other human creature was in sight; some cattle were grazing peacefully in the distant fields, and now and then a sea-fowl clove the air with its white wings; but this comparative silence and solitude only made our hearts beat all the calmer and freer, for 'tis in the very nature of spiritual persecution to make folk turn away from and mistrust (ofttimes with very good reason) their familiar friends and acquaintance, yea, those who eat bread with them, and are of kindred blood—thus fulfilling, to the letter, the words of our Lord, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

The white taper-pointed spire of Kingsbridge Church was visible from where we stood; yet neither haughty magistrate, like Squire Reynells, nor blustering yeoman, nor long-armed constable, might reach us there. True, our foes have sometimes been observed eyeing us from afar, and it might happen that when the boats containing divers parts of the congregation pushed off, and, having set these a-land, returned for the rest, the tide had encroached upon the rock, so as to give considerable cause of mirth to these cruel watchers, who once, to judge by the exceeding liveliness of their gestures, would have liked nothing better than see us forced swim for our lives, or perhaps drowned before their eyes.

After the meeting had been opened by prayer, Master Brande, at our pressing instance, consented to speak first. Standing erect among the ring of folk, his commanding figure—which by reason of its spareness appeareth still taller than it is—drawn up to its full height, he, casting an eye, keen and clear as a falcon's, upon us around him, gave out, in a voice of marvellous power and cadence, by way of text, the following Scripture: "A remnant according to the election of grace." Before he had uttered many sentences, Master Burdwood and myself could not refrain exchanging looks of admiration, perceiving our brother was of those whom the Lord girdeth with strength, as with a girdle.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit hath bestowed on him the Apostolic power of being able to impart some measure of it to the feeblest of his hearers. If they, whilst hanging upon the words of his lips, still remembered themselves to be mean and despised, whom the proud of this world trampled under their feet, yet felt they also that they were the sons and daughters of a King, who had chosen them "before the foundation of the world" was laid. Of poor account seemed the titles of earthly princes and rulers, compared with a royalty so ancient, of God's own free bestowing; and would HE fail to hold the children of His election even as the apple of His eye? This their present state of humiliation and suffering was but a purpose of His sovereign will, that they more signally hereafter, "through Him, might be glorified." Then all masterly, after reasoning awhile upon justification by faith, he dwelt with assurance so solemn and triumphant on the glorious victory awaiting the final perseverance of the saints, that I saw many a pale cheek flush, and meek eye kindle, among the listeners. I do believe, at such moment, either sword or stake would have been thought little other than a passage to heaven—the sharpness of which was scarce worth the reckoning, compared with "the glory that should follow."

Yet neither must I omit mention, Master Brande's denouncement of they who presumed approve themselves the bitter, ruthless persecutors of the Lord's

people, for its severity minded me of what I have heard of the men who scrupled not to set their feet upon the neck of a monarch, when that monarch proved false to his solemn obligations. This righteous sternness had in it an austerity which made the sisters tremble and hold each other by the hand till he had done.

Master Burdwood next discoursed excellently from these words, "Christ is all and in all." Truly his was doctrine that dropped "as the rain," and speech that distilled "as the dew;" his lucid manner of showing how grace first brings Christ and the soul of man together, and then unites them *everlastingly*, struck me as being, even for him, unusually admirable. With a devoutly sanctified frame of mind, he hath a head richly seasoned by experience; much learning; likewise a tongue silvered by the politeness of education and gentle nurture.

I followed Master Burdwood with an exhortation from a Scripture partly suggested me by our then situation—"The Rock of Ages." Some of the brethren also prayed. Master Trueman was drawn out, in an especial manner, to intercede for the increase, settlement, and prosperity of that persecuted portion of Christ's church in this realm, whereof we are members, which, separating from the State for the better keeping the faith pure, acknowledgeth Him alone as her supreme, living Head.

Ah, if in happier, peacefuller time the children of those who were that day gathered upon Saltstone should be permitted meet for worship in "a ceiled house" of prayer, sheltered from storm and rain, "none daring to make them afraid," may they never forget, and bid their sons and daughters remember after them, how *we* blessed the Lord and gave thanks for even so uncertain a resting-place for the soles of our feet, so brief a season of respite from terrors and alarms, as this lone rock of the sea afforded us.

Our succeeding exercise, though of a kind inexpressibly cheering and delightsome, was yet mingled with a gentle, tender sadness, the nature of which I will presently explain. We were a-going to sing, and might then and there do it to the full pitch of our voices, which, sooth to say, would have grown altogether rusted that way, had it not been for this occasional using of them upon Saltstone, at request of Mistress Hawes, and the other soft-hearted female folk. I drew out of my pocket a roll of paper, on which was writ the hymn—and 'twas his last—dear Master Jellinger had been employed upon, that time I surprised him asleep in his chamber. And here I can't refrain making an observe or two, touching a few persons I've known in my time, possessed with what they were pleased to call the tuneful gift of poesy. Alack, poor souls! 'twas a possession none need envy, seeing how

mean a pennyworth it made 'em. When they found they lacked clothes, and meat, and drink, just like other mortals, then, whatever golden dreamings might be in their brain, they'd rarely the hap to find the golden reality of a guinea in their purse; and letting this pass, how if any of their numbers chanced be spoken in their hearing—for ears so delicate are quickly tickled—did they eye the speaker, and with so friendly a countenance—granting they had the grace to blush a little—as plainly showed, when most they conceited they hid their thoughts, that they esteemed him far from doing them an unhandsome turn. And our beloved Master Jellinger was not without his little weakness this way also, though his composures were most-times so lengthy, that to *sing* them gave the singers a breathing. Yet he misliked, ay, and showed a spark of temper too, when we ventured curtail, or, as he said, "spoil 'em." Now this last hymn of his—not much exceeding a dozen verses—we resolved, as mark of our affection, and the value in which we held his memory, to leave out neither, but sing it all through. Young Mistress Grace Glover hath a voice sweet as ever woman or nightingale was dowered with; Master Hope likewise brave vocals. Thus lifting up our voices we sang; and methought, as the church above is so closely knit with the church below, who could tell —ay, who could tell—but that some of the glori-

fied members of the former might not then be divinely regarding us, their once pilgrim companions in the flesh?

The sun went westering down, setting the hills aglow with his glory, till they shone like golden hills of light. The trees of the dark and ancient wood sloping toward the water were gently stirred by a soft wind, till they joined their low murmurs with the chiming ripple of the waves, mingling harmoniously, in that which seemed the sweetest, tenderest, as well as solemnest of all requiems, for our departed brother in the Lord. The rim of the moon showed itself above the wood, and a star or two beside looked down upon us, and the tide came creeping up apace ere our singing was ended. After a fervent benediction from Master Brande, the boats were unfastened from the weedy edges of the rock and put off with their living freight, but by the time the last of the folk were fetched away their shoes were full of water.

It had been arranged among the brethren before we separated, that, God permitting, I should preach upon the followlng Sabbath at Linkum Hill, which, next to Saltstone, we held our safest, because one of our most sequestered places of resort. When the morning of the Lord's day appointed for my going thither was arrived, this Scripture, "My presence shall go with thee," impressed itself on my mind in so remarkable and comfortable a manner,

that I mentioned it to my wife, for she, finding herself with child, can no longer attend these our meetings."

"Dear husband, let me tell you my heart has been much engaged in prayer for your safe protection, and surely," cried she, joyfully, "the blessed words you have just uttered are the gracious answer vouchsafed me."

"Wife," quoth I, taking up my staff and settling my beaver aright, "it glads me more than I can express to find thou delightest in being very often at that best place on earth or in heaven either —'the feet of Jesus.' Each onward step we take in the strait and narrow path seemeth only to give us clearer view of the glorious brightness awaiting us at the end, when our brief night of sorrow here shall be changed there into a cloudless and eternal day."

While trudging along the solitary road which leadeth to the hill, I felt in so exceeding cheerful and composed a frame of mind, that I compared my soul to a well-tuned harp, whose chords gave answering harmony to the divine hand at whose touch the mighty anthem of a whole creation pealed forth, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

I had left the town some miles behind, and was passing a stile, when a man's voice called after me to slack my pace, and soon three of the friends

came up and joined me. They are worthy members of that dear scattered flock who love to count me among the number of their shepherds—yea, one ofttimes ready to exclaim, "I am less than the least." And I write these words not in that spirit of mock humility which is more acceptable, I trow, to Satan than either open bragging or a haughty carriage, but the sincere self-abasement which all true ministers of Christ experience. Full many a time I have heard such men as Master Howe and Master Hughes confess to the same, and with profoundest lowliness exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

My companions and I had not proceeded far, before other pilgrims to that city "whose builder and maker is God," overgat us, and we entered into so profitable a conversation together, that it made the way seem short and pleasant, instead of long and tedious. After crossing a rising open tract of country parcelled out in fields, with the light of an unclouded, newly-risen sun lying golden upon them, we shortly arrived in sight of the place where I was to preach. Beholding at some little distance the number of folk there, I said to him nearest me, "The strength of the hills is His also."

Whereupon he quickly rejoined, "I will make them and the places round about a blessing."

"Amen," was the fervent response of those who heard his words.

The hill of Linkum is a pretty sharp ascent, with three roads meeting at the top; and from each of these had come up that morning dwellers in surrounding villages, hamlets, and lone farm-houses —they who counted it "better to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The palfreys of certain of the gentlewomen, along with other horses, were tethered hard by. The saddles had been taken of, and placed in a half-circle upon the ground, to make seats more convenient for their owners; behind gathered the men-folk of the congregation, direct fronting the spot where I should take my stand. These are closely attentive, patient, above all, *prayerful* hearers. If a pastor's hands wax weak, as did the hands of Moses, and Amalek threatens to prevail, they will lift up and sustain them, and do their best to help, strengthen, and comfort him. Turn which way I would, grave, serious faces, deep, thoughtful, earnest eyes met mine: let such a people be never so tempted, tried, or buffeted, as the true "heirs of promise," God will not suffer them to "fall away."

At top o' the hill groweth a mountain ash-tree, green and vigorous; its branches made for me a pleasant canopy. Around us lay a fair, wide landscape, including a reach of the sea. Our beloved Rock Saltstone, when left bare by the tide, is very plainly discernible therefrom; likewise the square,

ancient tower of a remote village church, situate among lands which once made part the dower of that wise, discreet Queen, who, under a guiding Providence, proved a nursing-mother of the Reformation, to wit, the Lady Katherine Parr.

In a rapt and heavenly frame, such as the humblest believer is sometimes privileged experience, though neither tongue nor pen of angel or apostle can describe it, I then poured out my soul in prayer; yea, till the hoary, everlasting hills did seem respond an echo to my supplication. After I had done praying, I drew forth from my doublet a certain well-worn, leathern-coated Bible, which, God be thanked, from the time I was sixteen years of age till now, hath proved to me not only a breast-plate against the darts of Satan, but the preciousest of breast-jewels also. Unfastening the slender hasp which held its leaves together, I read the first chapter of the first Epistle of Peter, and briefly expounded thereon; at close of my remarks, the dear souls afore me raised their bee-like hum of grateful approval. This portion of our worship I ended with the 80th Psalm.

The text chosen by me for my discourse was —"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And the Holy Spirit loosed my tongue, and gave me power to utter the thoughts which flowed forth free, and fast, and

strong. Yea, felt I not that these poor lips of mine were touched as by "a live coal from off the altar?" And upon pausing to wipe my brow, I perceived the folk present were very greatly moved and affected by what the Lord had enabled His servant to declare to them.

Again I was about proceed, when an uneasy movement among they who were farthest off attracted my notice. This sudden motion on their part caused me stop. A long breath was drawn, in the hush of which, had a stray leaf rustled down, our ears, grown exceeding watchful, and quick to distinguish sounds, must have heard it. Thus stood we on the hill-top listening, much like a herd of startled deer, when they scent a coming danger. Soon I heard faintly the far-off gallop of horses' feet, proceeding at a furious rate along the distant valley, and knew at once the wolves were upon our track.

"Dear friends," cried I, "we must disperse; let the beasts be instantly saddled. Haste, my sisters, or 'twill be too late for flight."

With little flutter or commotion this advice was quickly acted on. All fervently we bid each other farewell; and though the men come in pursuit of us, Squire Reynells himself at their head, had by his direction divided themselves into separate parties—the better, as they conceited, to cut off our retreat—yet, thanks to the Lord's protecting

care, our extreme niceness of hearing, which, I've already said, is near as keen and delicate as the mole's; and, lastly, our perfect knowledge of every turn, bye-path, and covert thereabout, not one of us was caught, though some (myself for instance) within a hair's breadth of being so, by they who, breathing nought save fury, rode forth to worry us on that calm, peaceful Sabbath morning.

Squire Reynells offered ten gold pieces out of his own purse to divers rustics he met by the way, if they could instruct him how best, and surely, to seize me preaching: one simple clown he disdained not chastise with his own heavy riding-whip, because the clown declared ignorance of our whereabouts; but the justice, suspecting otherwise, handled him accordingly; his evil followers, meanwhile, did as they always do when let loose upon the country, in the breaking down of fences, trampling over gardens and orchards, and disdaining neither to fright women nor little children —the latter, in some instances, going into fits from terror—with a deal of other the like riotous mischief.

Before, however, they could reach the hill, I had fled for safety to the house of a very honest farmer, who, with most of his family, were at the meeting; under their roof is kept "a little chamber ready, with a bed and candlestick in it,"

for any "man of God" who cometh beneath its shadow. But worthy Master Blake, thinking 'twas likely I might need a closer concealment, had me to a place near the top of an out-building, where, through a chink in the wall, the person hidden could see, as well as hear, pretty much of what might be a-going on below.

Scarce was I gotten to this roost, and smothered up in hay and straw, ere Squire Reynells, followed by a servant, rode into the court-yard; my good friends, the farmer and the dame, were immediately in the porch to receive him.

"It has been reported me," said the justice, sternly, "that you would scruple not at harbouring some of those seditious brawlers—of whom John Hicks is chief—that designed meeting at Linkum Hill this morning."

Master Blake, by way of reply, very civilly asked the justice to dismount.

"A thought takes me," continued the latter, pointing to certain old, decayed buildings, greatly overrun with ivy, and exactly in the direction of the chink through which I was then regarding him, "that among such owlet-nests yonder, you might stow an odd score or two of those scoundrels. When my men come up I'll have 'em searched closely, and if any be found there, 'twould be better for you that all your ricks and barns were in a blaze."

The farmer replied, "They who suspected him would now have opportunity of seeing for themselves;" and this he said with so steady a voice, and apparently cool, unconcerned a manner, that the justice seemed a moment to waver in his purpose.

The servant who accompanied him ventured an observe, however, which I lost; but the master's reply sounded distinct enough,—

"Beshrew me, Giles, thou'rt in the right; the word of a long-faced fellow"—indicating Master Blake with the handle of his riding-whip—"having such a pair of spindle legs, should not be trusted." For which last most sensible reason—though very lame in his own, by reason of the gout—he managed to get off his horse, and, leaning on his man, hobble into the house.

Several of his followers arriving about the same time, they all dismounted, and very soon an occasional scream from a female voice, mocked by loud laugh and scurril jest on part of the horsemen, told the search was begun in right earnest; yet was it given me more fully, I think, at this season than throughout all my previous experience, to realize during the whole of the commotion—of which I knew myself to be the principal cause—the truth of this most blessed Scripture, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

In a short time the more suspicious of the

searchers left the house, and began to pry among the out-buildings; next I heard them clattering up a ladder, by which means they gained access to the place where I was lying hidden; and one, seizing a pitchfork, made the straw fly in all directions. Then I gave myself up for lost; yet, although the prong of the fork several times nearly touched me, it was the will of a gracious Providence that I should remain undiscovered; and, after a while, grown weary of a search which proved fruitless, I heard them growling retreat; and, not long afterward, the discomfited justice and his evil troop, leaving the farm, struck across the country in quite another direction.

The good farmer and his son quickly came up to me, and down we went amid the assembled family, who embraced, and wept for very thankfulness over this my preservation; the ruin that would have fallen upon their honest selves, had I been discovered, seemed not even to enter their thoughts. At its best estate "the friendship of the wicked is enmity with God;" but that His children experience for each other is of a nature which "loveth at *all times*"—yea, truly that of a "brother born for adversity."

I remained where I was till the night closed in, as I knew every step of my homeward path so well, methinks I could traverse it blindfold; then, taking a very affectionate leave of these kind folk,

set forth on my return. At a certain part of the road, the trees, nearly meeting overhead, afford very grateful shade from the heat of the noontide sun; but at the hour I was traversing it, made it seem wondrous mirk and lonesome, and I met never a living creature. When come to an ancient way-side cross of stone, set up by the Papists in Queen Mary's time, this relic of a fearful past showed dim and ghostly in the faint star-light. Regarding it steadfastly, I said to myself, "Thou mute symbol of the love and the sufferings of Him, who during His brief earthly sojourn did nought save heal, and bless, and pardon; what a mark of awful condemnation art thou upon the forehead of that false church which grew drunken with the blood of His saints!" Just as I touched the hoar thing with my staff, the moon, that had been hitherto concealed, looked out through a rent in the clouds, shedding a white unnatural lustre upon all things, making the gray cross appear especially distinct. I am of too sober a turn to let my fancy play me fool's tricks, or I had likened it to a spectre, which, casting its shroud, was spreading its grisly arms before me. Yet, though I avoid indulgence in all superstitious conceits, I could not wholly banish a certain chill presentment of evil, in connection with Popery, that might be looming in the shadow of the future for this fair and noble realm of England.

Walking briskly, in half an hour I entered Kingsbridge, and as I was going up the main street overgat a man and woman. The latter held a lanthorn. At sound of my step they looked round.

"'Tis Master Hicks," said a familiar voice.

"Prithee, what takes you abroad so late o' night, friend Crispin?" quoth I.

"Alack, Sir, my youngest child is down, we fear, in the same fever John Lucas is just dead of."

"*Dead!*" exclaimed I, much startled; for though report of his distemper had been confirmed, my family having little knowledge, and holding no manner of acquaintance with those among whom he lived and mostly companied, I was not at all 'ware of his end being so near. "Then do I trust this poor soul, like the dying thief upon the cross, had grace given him to cry for mercy, and that he received the same heavenly pardon."

"Ah, kind Sir," broke in Goody Browne, the woman Crispin had fetched—for she was a noted tender of sick folk—"I've been by many a death-bed in my time, but never such a one as *his* afore."

"Hold, Goody, there's another piece of news to tell, which a bird o' the air brought to the town since noon; but 'tis true as we're now talking together, and maybe the quicker Master Hicks learns it the better."

"Then bid thy tongue make haste."

"Alack, Sir, ye'd hardly guess, though you know Master Beare hath again been to Exon, for he's in mighty favour with my lord the bishop, who, 'tis said, hath mainly helped forward the business of his promotion."

"His *promotion!*" cried I, in very great alarm, "what on earth dost mean?"

"Mean, Sir? why that he received his commission as was yesterday, and is now one of his Majesty's justices of the peace."

"Oh, peace! oh, justice!" groaned I; "what crimes will be committed in your names!"

"And he returns, Master Hicks, to his house to-morrow."

"I will leave this place (an my wife be willing) at break o' dawn," said I.

"The best—ay, the very best thing ye can do, Sir," said the crone, eagerly, and yet with a quaking voice.

"Why so, dame?" replied I, somewhat surprised. "Have I done aught—how can I—to make *you* thus willing I should be gone?"

"Sir," quoth she, solemnly—and as the light of the lanthorn (which she seemed to hold unsteadily) flickered fitful upon her wrinkled face, I saw that it wore a haggard and most perturbed expression —"I told ye John Lucas died hard, for to the end he was trying and striving to catch and grasp at something, which evermore slipped from his

hands, till, with a terrible cry—I would 'twere out of my ears"—here the lanthorn shook so that I laid hold of it—"he screamed forth—he was in his last throe, Sir—" The old woman stopped as if unable to go on.

"What was it he said?" demanded Crispin and I in a breath.

"Just this, Master Hicks, and never a word spake after, 'Alive or dead, I'll have ye.'"

Chapter XIII.

Showing the Charge upon which the Rev. Mr. Hicks was "Cast into Prison."

BLACK! how wide the difference in the aspect of the sun's face seen through the loophole of a prison, to that it presenteth when viewed at early morning from the breezy top of some high hill, or broad expanse of heathery common! Yet, caged in gaol as I am, it cheereth me to watch those rays of his celestial brightness which find their way between the rusted iron bars of the cell where now these many weeks I've lain in durance. But the gaoler alloweth me to go into the common room, as well as court-yard of this sad place, at certain seasons; and through God's everlasting mercy to His servant, even in this most doleful gaol of Exon, thus far have I been able to bear my load of sorrow like one who knoweth how heavy soever it may

prove, he hath only short while to carry it, and nothing doubting in the end I shall experience safe and joyful deliverance. If to finite, mortal vision, my deliverer appear both stern and terrible—for many a wight dieth here of hunger, cold, and other ills to flesh and blood, so nauseous and distressful I cannot bring my pen to note 'em down—still, He I serve can, with my last breath, give me strength to cry, "In all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Some three days since, I gat a parcel, containing a change of linen, likewise my thick doublet of quilted serge, the which my poor wife contrived send by a safe, trusty hand. Before, however, it reached mine, the parcel must need pass through those of the gaoler, who kept back part; but the remainder (for which I felt thankful enow, as winter hath set in sharply) was given to me. Shaking with cold, I hasted put on my warm doublet, when lo! something I felt in the left sleeve made me turn it inside out directly, and there, all cunningly sewn up (I knew by *whose* needle), was a little secret packet, opening which joyfully, I found, wrapt in a silken glove, a slender sum of money, and certain loving words traced on a slip of paper, with here and there a round blot, as if a drop had now and then fallen from the writer's eyes, and dried up as it fell. At sight of this (though half perishing with cold, and lack of whole-

some food), the tears rushed into mine, near as quick as they rise in a woman's; for it pierced my heart to think how sorely the tender, faithful givers of the little purse might then be lacking that which, regardless of their own wants, they must needs be sending to relieve mine.

Having procured from the youngest, and best favoured of the turnkeys, the loan of an ink-horn, giving this same person a penny, I besought the further civility of a pen, whereupon he brought me what did seem a quill, and doubtless 'twas plucked from the pinion of some kind of bird, yet one, I trow, never designed by nature to furnish pens for the use of any rational scribe. I, knowing remonstrance on the part of a captive generally provoketh to the taking away any small indulgence granted him, or perhaps crueller usage, said nothing, and now prick and scratch my jottings in the best manner I am able (and 'tis so bad *I* can scarce make 'em out) upon the pages of this my note-book, which, unawares to myself (when I, more than two months agone, was seized, and clapped up in prison), happened to be in a secret pocket of the coat I then had on, and thus it cometh to pass that I have it now with me in gaol.

But ah, how unlike is the poor soul dipping a pen, less pliant than a cook's skewer, into a drop o' mouldy ink, and locked in a dismal cage, to the same man *free*, and sitting, maybe, in a sunny

chamber of his own house ; his books, and papers, and other scholarly appertenance, lying all handsome and convenient about him, just as mine did, when I began the introduction of my "Treatise on the Heavenly Substance," with nought to break the current of my meditations, save, perhaps, the sweet voice of my wife, a-chiding silverly an active urchin who had contrived upset a brother in a go-cart. And then the soft answer of that *other* little voice to hers, which came up to me, where I sat in my study, more like the cooing of a wood-dove, than any other sound to which I can liken it.

Upon going back to my very last notes (saving these I am now a-making), I find Master Beare's promotion to the bench of justices duly recorded, and, at end of it, the shocking speech of poor John Lucas, just the moment his soul was on the point of departure. Therefore it is from that page I will take up and pursue the thread of my most dolorous narration.

* * * * *

Greatly appalled and horror-struck, I bid Crispin and the nurse a hasty good-night, and soon arrived at my own door. As usual, my wife was anxiously upon the watch for my return, and afore I could begin inform her of the evil tidings I had just learned, she discovered herself to be already in full possession of those concerning Master Beare. Ere I found opportunity to give opinion touching the

wisdom of an immediate departure from Kingsbridge, she 'gan importune me to let her prepare for the same.

"And without loss of a day, or an hour, I entreat ye, dear husband, there be no delay!" And then the poor soul wrung her hands, and melted into a fit of very wife-like tenderness, already conceiting me dragged before his worship, Justice Beare.

"Well," said I, "seeing *you* are so bent upon instant removal from this place, *I'll* not oppose it;" nor, as I spoke, could I help smiling inly, thus to see how love can make folk, as it were, forestall each other's very thoughts. "We'll be up and stirring by the dawn, wife, and I doubt not God's angels will have charge concerning us. Now let's to bed."

At break o' the next day I rose. "Our bit of household stuff," quoth I, to my busy spouse, "Master Best will gladly lend his horse and cart for; and neither thy wardrobe, nor mine, will consume much time in the packing of."

Then in the grey light of early morning forth I sallied to make known our resolve to a stanch friend or two, whose affection and faithfulness to me and mine I pray the Lord return a thousandfold to them and theirs. And these, while grieving at our purposed departure, perceived the prudence of the movement so clearly, that they used the utmost of their ability to forward it.

All things combining to favour us, not long after sunrise we saw with tearful eyes that dainty spire recede till lost in distance, which I had regarded with such interest the very first evening of our coming to Kingsbridge—a little town whose situation is most choice and delectable, yea, the country air thereof so soft and delicate, that 'tis no marvel the abbots chose them sites both in and round about it. And now, in lieu of monk and friar, dwell there many dear and honest souls, whose hearts are knit with ours in the bonds of a brotherly and sisterly love, and a friendship which hath been proven, and stood bravely that truest of all tests, the test of adversity ; and in parting with them, we could not but experience the pangs of an exceeding sharp and sorrowful regret. Thus, before the new-made justice, Master Beare—blown with pride and insolence at his newly-acquired dignity—was returned to his house, we were near twenty miles distant. In worldly goods I went away from Kingsbridge poorer and emptier than I arrived there ; yet our sweet children had increased in number, and, by God's blessing, proved towardly and obedient in parts and spirit, as they were healthy, well-favoured, and beautiful in person.

Now my wife had a kinswoman, one Mistress Lettice Aylmer, widowed and childless, who lived in a loneish country place, though 'twas bare three miles distant the good sea-port o' Plymouth. If for

several years we'd never seen each other (our circumstances prevented the holding of personal intercourse), the affection always expressed toward us by Mistress Aylmer, and very heartily reciprocated on our part, caused me entertain no fear of putting her kindness to the proof in my then exigency. Though poor in purse, she had a large, sweet, bounteous nature, which delighted in doing good to all that needed and came within the reach of its limited means. The house she lived in made a part of her narrow jointure. We trusted the gate would open freely to receive us; and her right-loving reception upon our unlooked-for arrival, proved how true was the conjecture. What a cup of spiced wine is to him whose life-blood is a slowly freezing, or a burst of cheerful sunshine and fresh air to the bed-rid tenant of some dull chamber, seemed the tender converse of my wife, and the smiles and caresses of our blooming, loving children to the yearning, weary heart of that gentle, desolate woman.

We had not been in our new home scarce a day before I, with my boys (for I never could abide the owning an idle pair of hands), fell with a right good will to work upon the nearly waste piece of ground (once a brave garden), which surrounded the sides of the queer, quaint, decaying, gable-ended, many-chimneyed dwelling (in its time a house of some pretension) of Mistress Aylmer; and

we wrought to such purpose that, ere a week was ended, she smiling said, under lusty labourers like us, her wilderness soon bid fair to "rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

Thus sped a few brief, happy days, during which the cessation from petty insult, worry, and alarm, that in Kingsbridge fretted and bittered our lives, made my wife's eye lose its anxious look, and brought the colour to her cheek again. Truly, I did feel it grateful, this sweet, tranquil shelter from (I blush to write it) the rude attacks of my *fellow-men.* On another leaf, a great way back, I mind saying something about the *riches of poverty*, and we were then a-proving and partaking of them, for excellent Mistress Aylmer was greatly reduced in her estate as a gentlewoman; but our dinners of herbs, where contentment, thankful hearts, and healthful appetites to boot, were never wanting, troubled us not at all. I had still four gold pieces left out of the little capital invested in my grey doublet, and these would help fill our children's mouths with bread a good while to come; our raiment was certainly much the worse for wear, the boys having outgrown their clothes in a way that ofttimes made us both sad, and merry, to behold. My good wife patched, repaired, and altered them ingeniously to the utmost they could bear it; she still contrived to keep intact my well-saved suit of Sabbath raiment, and one morning (after we had been at Mistress

Aylmer's hard upon a month) I observed her carefully unfold the coat, and sharply spying a little rent in the skirt, she straightway fell a-mending it, with skill so delicate, and a kind of tenderness (the faded garment was long past its best), just as if the cloth could feel the prick of her dainty needle, that I, being in a merry pin, said, laughing—

"Wife, my coat would soon have near as many holes in it as the roof of our good cousin's house here, if 'twere not for thy very constant watchfulness thereof."

"I' faith," quoth she, and sighed softly, "but dearly do I love the work."

"And if," pursued I, somewhat moved, "'tis grown thus frail and threadbare, still, ye know, it *never hath been turned.*"

With all a woman's quickness of divining she dropt her needle, for she caught my meaning, and looked up smiling in my eyes till her own 'gan fill with tears, her aspect at the moment minding me of sunshine breaking out amid a shower of April rain.

"I know," cried she, "ye might, had ye so willed, have kept one black and sleek as that upon a raven's back; yet, dear husband, rather, *far* rather, would thy poor wife see thee in this she's now a-mending."

'Twas on the evening of the same day, each little circumstance in which seems graven with

a remarkable clearness and distinctness on the tablets of my heart, that, according to our wont, we were assembled about the usual supper-hour in the half-hall, half-kitchen of Mrs. Aylmer. The night was gathering mirk and stormy, the rain pattering against the casement, adown the little pointed panes, of which the great drops kept rolling heavily as tears, while the wind went moaning round the corners, and sobbed at the crazy doors of the old house, like a voice with the burthen of human woe in its wailing cadence. But if all without was thus chill and dreary, we felt peaceful and content enow gathered round the wide, warm, cheery hearth, on which some logs of wood I had chopped with my own hands cast a bright ruddy glow upon the faces of those before it. 'Twas at season like this I loved to question and instruct my children, and a charming ring they made about the tall, ancient chair (with back as straight as Brother Tooker's) in which I played the schoolmaster; the click of good Mistress Aylmer's knitting-needles mingled pleasantly with the hum of my wife's spinning-wheel, which sometimes stopped as of its own accord, the while she nodded, smiled, and listened to hear how bravely our eldest acquitted themselves, and what pertinent answers they were quick and ready with, I forgetting not duly to impress upon those old enow to understand me, that the very soul of the highest wisdom and learning, as of religion itself,

consists in that which can be applied best to the improvement of, and shows brightest in, the practick part of life. Then bethinking me of my apt, pretty girl, scarce four years old, who was a-conning the task I'd set her, "Sweetheart," quoth I, "'tis now your turn." And (considering how her bright eyes had been drawn away by a mime of a kitten's merry antics with the pear-shaped pincushion dangling at Mistress Aylmer's girdle) she said off the cross-row in her horn-book to admiration; and, with her little clear voice making its childish music in my ear, I heeded not the advancing sound of what, amid the gusty pauses of the wind and rain, Mistress Aylmer concluded must be a party of hunters returning late from the chase coming along the road, direct before the pillars of the broken gateway of her house. At length the trampling of horses, their shoes striking sharply on the stones of the court-yard itself, followed by a knock of thundering loudness at the low, arched entrance, made us all start to our feet; but ere I'd time to attend the summons there came another, as if from the stroke of a battering-ram, nearly sending the door off its rusty hinges, and rattling the casements with a worse discord than that of the howling wind. Hastily drawing back the bolt, I looked out into the darkness, and directly my name was shouted by at least half-a-dozen voices, some of whom I recognized as belonging to our Kingsbridge foes.

The court seemed full of men and horses, and before I'd power to ask the meaning of this strange arrival, all defenceless, I was roughly seized, and a pair of hand-bolts fastened upon my wrists.

When recovered, after this rude surprise, the use of speech sufficiently, I accosted him who appeared the leader of the troop, requiring to know for what particular offence I was thus made prisoner. Naturally enow, I could think upon none other than that of preaching, and attending those religious meetings by unholy statutes called conventicles. The person I addressed hereupon produced what he said was a special warrant for my apprehension; and, taking the candle from the table, showed me the name BEARE, signed in straggling, tipsy-looking letters at the bottom, and next proceeded read it out aloud.

God of truth and mercy! did my ears deceive me? No, they did not; though a mist, as of blood, swam before my eyes, and a shuddering kind of sickness crept over my flesh, to learn by the scroll the man was reading that I, John Hicks, a minister of the blessed Gospel, was therein accused of the crime of *murther*, and as being "a principal party in causing the death by violence of one John Lucas, lately deceased at Kingsbridge."

On hearing all this, my wife, who had hitherto remained silent, in a kind of stupor, gave a shriek, which made my bones thrill, and fell backward in a swoon. Upon my making an instinctive motion

towards her, two of the men seized me, and a third, cocking a pistol, swore he would shoot me dead on the spot, if I attempted to move; but another of their number, more compassionate, helped our distressed, terrified kinswoman carry the poor insensate soul up to her chamber, followed by most of the scared young children.

"Surely," cried I, when again able to speak, "the father of lies himself must have invented this charge whereof I am accused."

"Well, master, *that* will be your business to prove as best ye may, in another place, to-morrow; but we've many a mile to ride, and our orders are special sharp concerning ye, so the sooner we're on our road there the better."

This fearful passage in my life giveth me such anguish to reflect upon, that I shall make it as brief as possible. Now, indeed, I felt the hour was come in which it was the Lord's will to try His servant; even "as gold is tried in the furnace by the hand of the refiner." Before I mounted the horse, whose bridle, chained to that of another rid by a stalwart constable, was led up to the door (it being decided I should be taken direct on to the place where the magistrates Beare and Reynells, with several others of a similar stamp, would hold a session about noon o' the following day), I craved earnestly to be allowed take leave of my wife and children; and a minute or so was granted me for the purpose, a couple of

men going along with me into the chamber. I found her just as a person seemeth when restored to some degree of consciousness, after being stunned by a heavy blow; or like one wakened hastily out of a frightful dream. And *this* was no dream. Good Mistress Aylmer, who had so piously sheltered and sympathized with us in our misfortunes, sat by the bedside, holding my wife's hand in hers; the tears slowly stealing down her own withered cheek, like drops from a fountain whose source is nearly dry, while my children clung around me in all the passion of youthful sorrow.

"Dear wife," said I, speaking as distinct and calmly as I could, "the time is come, and when least we expected, that I am to be taken from thee. It may be but a short season, for my innocence *must* appear; and thou wilt not fail remember, if thy husband is in the hand of man, he is in the hand of God also."

"Oh," cried she, rousing up at sound of my voice, "I cannot let you go alone; we will die *together!*" Saying the words with a kind of despairing energy, and a look in her soft eyes I had never observed there before; her voice, too, sounded strange and unnatural. I feared her reason was forsaking her, and this was a moment of horror and darkness to my soul; making that which had gone before appear almost as nought.

"Save me, O my God!" exclaimed I, "the seeing

this poor heart 'pressed out of measure beyond strength.'" And the Lord heard my prayer. "My dear wife, I shall not go *alone*," answered I, as composedly as I was able. "He will go with me who never forsaketh His people. 'They are preserved for ever.'"

Then, to my unutterable relief and thankfulness, I saw the tears stream down, fast and helplessly, over the poor soul's pallid cheeks. Stretching out her little work-worn hands towards me, they touched the iron in which mine were locked; and perceiving at this how painful a shiver ran through her frame, I said, earnestly, "By thy fortitude in controlling as much as thou canst thy present suffering, I shall count thy love deeper than any outward perturbation or disturbance can show. Sweet friend, true wife, hearken to my parting words and obey them. Trust thy husband, as he trusteth thee and thy children, wholly, undoubtingly, to the mercy and care of One who 'out of darkness bringeth forth light.'"

"Ah, I feel that God *is* with thee, husband mine," faintly whispered her white, quivering lips. "Yea, I will trust Him, though He slay me."

In less than five minutes afterward I was set out upon my dismal journey. The men who guarded me had some thought of tying my feet under the belly of the horse I rode; but on my mildly remonstrating they spared me the indignity, and themselves

a most unnecessary precaution. These fellows were very rough and hardened, yet they showed not the malignant cruelty with which poor John Lucas was wont insult his victims, and concerning whose sad end, and the circumstances which preceded and followed it, I must here (in order to make my jottings sufficiently clear) unwillingly go back to, and give further and more succinct account thereof.

Master Beare had sworn a bitter revenge upon me. Since that morning he was carried, feet foremost, out of my poor house at Kingsbridge, and because his malice for a time was checked and baffled, it proved none the less cruel and vindictive in the end. His willing servitor died, as before related, of a fever of the putrid kind, and so did Crispin's child, and three other persons besides; but *after* he, John Lucas, was buried, Satan put it into the brain of the new-made justice (who chafed fiercely on his return home at learning I had disappeared, and could nowhere be heard of) to find, if possible, some pretext for laying the cause of this man's death at *my* door, taking counsel with certain folk near as wicked as himself. He and they decided on bringing against me as the principal, and other of the friends present at the meeting on the morning to which I allude, as participators therein, the following charge, namely, that John Lucas, in the affray which then took place (when *he* certainly would have killed *me* if he could, and the hasty summons came,

for the soul of dear Master Jellinger to quit its earthly tenement, and leave "the storm and windy tempest, to be at rest for ever"), had there received a deadly hurt, from the effect whereof he afterwards languished and died. These evil plotters sought Joan Lucas, widow of the deceased; and she, 'tis thought, hearing the chink of gold pieces at her ear, agreed to strengthen this horrid falsehood by swearing that her husband declared Master Hicks and his friends so maltreated him upon that occasion, he was sick and languishing ever after. Now, more than half the town-folk were ready to attest how hale, and healthful, and strong of limb he was, till the fever seized him. Many of the fellows he had haled along, and put in the stocks and cage, beside craft of another kind he'd whipped soundly, bearing a clamorous testimony thereto. But this false woman is not only the daughter of a father of ill-repute, she hath a mother of the like fame; therefore, when she wedded Lucas, folk said 'twas an evil branch grafted upon a bitter tree, and who could expect aught so corrupt to bear the wholesome print of truth? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" The descent and marriage of this Joan Lucas (in one sense), Enoch Trueman observed, brought to his mind that of hers who of old shed the blood of the righteous, till, though a king's daughter, the dogs hasted to lick her own. The father also deposed that *he* saw the marks of our

ill-usage still visible upon the corpse of his son-in-law, while the stretchers were laying it out. Furnished with such evidence, Justice Beare immediately issues a special warrant to take me (when I could be found), as chief and foremost in the alleged murther, and divers other of the brethren as accessory thereto. These last, after immense trouble and vexation, were permitted get sureties for their appearance, the coming assize, at which my trial is to take place.

Thus far Master Beare and his colleagues dared proceed, knowing a coroner's inquest had never been thought of, nor, of course, holden upon the body, for it was a test they wished by all means to avoid, and they did so, till 'twas far worse than having none at all; but those of my friends accused as being abettors in the deed, and strong in their indignant innocence thereof, spake out right boldly concerning this wilful omission on the part of the new justice, and thus it came to be decided the inquest should even *then* be holden. So the grave of the dead was opened, and the poor rotten corpse, which had said to corruption, "Thou art my mother," and to the worm, "Thou art my sister," taken up, and its loathly lineaments uncovered before certain, who, taking a shrinking look thereon, turned fearful and appalled away.

The jury being impanelled, witnesses on both sides were examined: first, the widow of him a-lying in his grave-clothes at the church porch, with a

husky voice and bleached lips, swore to the same false purport she had done before. Joan's father, thinking his daughter spoke too low, was noticed pluck her by the sleeve, ere he bore a like testimony himself; yet, when turn came for evidence to be heard on the part of the accused, who, strange to tell, should appear among them save the very aged father and mother of the defunct John Lucas himself? The tears and wailings of this grey-headed pair (one of whom is since dead) were exceeding pitiful; they were full of a sorrowful resentment against Master Beare, whom they grievously upbraided with moving this disturbance, whereby their son's body was taken from the grave, and, all unfit for human eyes to rest upon, exposed in so shocking a manner; and, God be thanked, they were kept from the mortal sin of perjury, for if they heartily misliked *us*, yet did they stoutly persist in maintaining their son died of his distemper, the fever, and nought beside. As if this was not enow to put the justice and his creatures to confusion, forth steps a chirurgeon (who had seen John Lucas in his sickness) to confirm the truth of what the aged pair said. While this person was speaking, the greatest astonishment and mortification were visible among our enemies, they having been avised of his previous intention to advance nothing that would tend to establish our guiltlessness of the accusation laid against us; but he afterward confessed he was sud-

denly moved to say what he did by a power he felt himself wholly unable to resist. The finger of God was upon this man.

Then the jury, after consulting awhile, declared their verdict to be that John Lucas "died a natural death by visitation of God."

This honest acquittal by twelve of our fellow-countrymen, and most of them adverse to the opinions we hold, and the practice of the Non-conformist ministers in preaching, as they ofttimes do, at peril of liberty, sometimes life, might surely have been thought sufficient to free us from all trouble touching further prosecution upon this dreadful charge. Not so. Master Beare, whose hate is implacable, "yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter," by an unheard-of wanton exercise of his new authority, which he would never have presumed stretch thus boldly if not confident of protection, whatever the result may prove, in quarters strong and powerful enough to screen him, issues afresh the special warrant for my apprehension. And straightway those at his beck, "whose feet are swift" to run upon such an errand, scoured the country for many a mile around—at first with no success, for they of the Kingsbridge friends who knew where I was kept faithfully their trust. At length, Master Beare's men scented my place of refuge; ay, just at the time when I felt it passing sweet to exclaim, "The beasts of the earth

have their grassy lair to lie down in, and the fowls of the air their nests to fly to, and through God's mercy we have also found a shelter, where for awhile we may be let rest in peace."

I now return again to that part of my narration when I was seized at Mistress Aylmer's house, taken from my distracted family, and compelled set out upon a journey, during a night so dismal that methought 'twould scarcely ever *end in morning*. The roads proving very heavy, and the horses jaded, we stopped to rest on our dreary way at two or more hostelries. I mind the men halting a few minutes outside a little rustical inn, the hostess of which, struck with my deject appearance and drenched condition, for the rain was falling heavily, brought me a horn of frothing ale; and though I told her I had never a groat wherewith to requite the civility, she smiling kindly bade me drink it, and "keep a heart of cheer."

The place where the session was appointed to be holden proved a mean, sorry village, lying several miles distant from Kingsbridge, and our poor nags being sadly tired, we did not arrive there till the magistrates had begun assemble. Though early, Master Beare was already seated on the bench. He wore the look of a man who'd been drinking hard, and the fresh mire with which his boots and the skirts of his coats were spattered, showed he had ridden hard as well. No sooner did he catch

a glimpse of me with gyves upon my wrists, between a couple of his men, than his fierce blood-shot eyes seemed to dilate in size the while they gloated upon a sight to them so welcome; but I, strong in the fearlessness of an innocence white and clean, regarded this man, who, in thus brutally persecuting me, debased himself, with a look calm and steadfast enow to make even his red face change its hue. He 'gan shuffle in his place, and at length shifted it, each movement showing how ill he felt himself at ease. Yea, now that his desire was granted, and I stood bound and guarded by his creatures before him, methought this Scripture applied well to Master Beare, from one in my then condition: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." This bad man's conscience was not wholly seared, the very presence of his victim confounded him, and his speech, at best none o' the clearest, grew still more thick and confused, while answering the questions of those about him.

To be brief, the usual forms were hurried through with a most unseemly despatch, and an order for my committal to Exon Gaol unanimously agreed upon by the rest of the justices, who I perceived were fully disposed to countenance by their support Master Beare in his proceedings.

"Not an hour should be lost, Sir Hugh,"

quoth Squire Reynells to a gentleman beside him, in a scarlet hunting-coat, with a very full-fed person, and a nose shaped like an eagle's beak, "in lodging this troublous sometime parson where for certain he'll neither hold nor abet again in a hurry any more such murtherous conventicles."

"Ay, ay," was the reply, "and we need nail up a scarescrow of his colour, in order to frighten the rest o' the crows."

Master Beare was at this moment hastily signing his name to a paper his clerk presented him. He cared not to read it.

"*That* will do," I heard him say. "Take it; all is right."

"Sir," cried I, in a voice which might be heard to the furthest corner of the place, "that will *not* do, and well ye know all done and now doing here is wrong, is false, is——"

"Stop this brawler's tongue," shouted Reynells; and the magistrates, roaring out together like lions, exclaimed, "Gag him, if nought else will do't."

Seeing their men prepare obey the order with alacrity, I was fain hold my peace. The high-nosed gentleman in the scarlet coat then said, "The speedier this Hicks is removed the better, and" —(addressing the constables, at the same time dragging a huge watch from his pocket)—"if ye make haste, before night he can be caged."

And haste *was* made, fresh horses were quickly gotten, and at close o' the day I passed through the grim portals of the gates of the said prison, nor could I stifle a groan, when I heard them close jarringly behind me.

Chapter XIV.

Rev. Mr. Hicks in Gaol, about his Master's business.—The Trial.

THE divers grievous sufferings I've experienced since I was clapped up here, together with my late sore sickness (so near proving a mortal one), hath hindered me such long time from the using my pen and ink, that now (being still in extreme weak condition) I do need make pretty determinate struggle against the languor of a disposition inclining me to lay aside these jottings altogether. Neither will I deny my miseries at times have been of a poignancy so extreme, that it seemed to me almost like the laying bare a shrinking nerve or sinew (as with their knives the chirurgeons do)—even the committal of my feelings to this the silent keeping of my little book.

Winter having set in bitterly (as I noted after receiving my poor wife's parcel), its nipping air did so unkindly chill and freeze my blood, lacking

the grateful warmth of fuel and wholesome exercise, that there were moments when I feared my heart itself would grow a-cold. And, sad to tell, the poor prisoners in this gaol are kept upon such starving short commons, that when my last groat was gone, a barley cake given me at times in the prison court-yard, by a kind soul coming there occasionally, who pitied my most sorrowful condition, proved a boon, none save a wight dinnerless and supperless for two days on a stretch can fitly understand the refreshment of. Alack! in gaols there be those, if the prisoners hap to have a little money (or 'tis suspected they can raise it through friends), who scruple not to prey upon them, as vultures will upon a helpless living quarry.

By assigned reason of a quibbling law pretext (though most like another I fear me I sound too truly) my trial has been postponed till the spring assize, now fully arrived. Perhaps certain cruel folk might shrewdly conclude, a winter passed in a gaol, reported about the worst in England, would render any other sort of trial for John Hicks quite needless, and they have been *very* near hitting their deadly mark. But the Lord, blessed be His name! hath seen fit, by preserving His servant alive, to disappoint their malice; yea, in the sharpest exercises of faith and patience, enabled me, as never I did afore I came hither, to prove the truth of His own gracious promise, "My grace is

sufficient for thee," and to feel that they whom wicked men hate most, are also those whom *He* loves most.

Now, some of the saddest of my trials in this place (which assuredly is one of Satan's strongholds) have arisen from the foul converse and shocking evil practices, when opportunity presented, of by far the greater number of they around me. Misery, starvation, and ofttimes brutal punishment from the gaoler and his men, instead of taming and subduing, did the rather tend to harden or madly exasperate my unhappy fellow-prisoners; and fain was I to wish I could shut my ears against the words of their profane tongues as easy as I could my eyes against their persons. This matter weighing heavily upon my heart, I hasted lay it before the Lord; my faith in praying is this—that, as spiritual breathings are the very soul of spiritual living, so He, who, by His Holy Spirit, giveth us the desire to come to Him in this wise, never denieth a *faithful* prayer.

Even while I prayed, a light broke in upon my mind, and, rising up from my knees, I exclaimed, "What an unprofitable servant have I been since I came here, where surely God hath work for me to do! I will delay no longer to be about my Master's business. And afterward, whenever fitting moment offered, or I could any wise contrive make one myself, I spake out boldly that of which my heart was full to the thieves and cut-purses by

whom I was surrounded, beseeching them fervently to "flee from the wrath to come." At first, they gibed and scoffed, and then began pelt me; and soon such a tumult was raised, that the turnkeys, followed by the gaoler, came running in to see what the cause might be. These fiercely threatened; and, in consequence of my persistence in my exhortations to the prisoners, I was locked up several hours over time in the filthiest of the stifling cells, and my poor, scant allowance of food taken away. Yet, through divine grace strengthening me, I bore these things joyfully, for His sake who bore the death of the cross for mine; and in time, the gaoler and his men grew softer, I giving them never an angry look, nor froward, peevish word, because I knew the heavenly strength a-lying in meekness and forbearance. At length they grew so far softened as actually to permit me preach in the court-yard of the prison, which I've done repeatedly; and if the precious seed of Gospel truth sown in so *much* weakness hath some of it fallen in stony places, to be choked by thorns or scorched by heat, other, I have been privileged receive good evidence, fell "into good ground"—yea, hath already "brought forth fruit."

And here I will observe what a notable difference I perceived in the expression of the countenances and 'haviour of these poor souls, the prisoners, when I set before them, as I joyed to do, the

tender mercy, the long-suffering, the yearning, pitiful compassion, the wondrous love of Christ as a Divine Redeemer—to that they presented when I plied them with rebukes and threatenings. To the latter they most times hearkened either with sullen, dogged indifference, or scornful, defiant sneers; but when I spake of the pardon vouchsafed the dying thief, the welcome awaiting the prodigal son, the gentle admonition given to the woman taken in adultery, their aspect changed. For these were all so many keys by which the Holy Spirit helped me unlock their hardened hearts, and bid tears flow from eyes which seemed to have forgot what blessed thing it was to weep at word of truth or tenderness; and, with gratitude inexpressible, I, seeing such tokens of emotion in my hearers, said inwardly, "Though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots," yet "with God *all things* are possible." Many were still very young in years, and from their earliest childhood owned to no training, save that given them by vicious parents, or wicked keepers and companions; these I regarded with profound compassion, for while the youngest were almost preternaturally sharp in all manner of evil knowledge, I yet found it a more difficult matter to bring down my discourses to their sin-darkened comprehension, than if I'd been called to preach before the bishops in Latin.

Among this dismal company was one who minded me of her of old, namely, that "*woman of the city*, which was a sinner," who, afterward kneeling at our Lord's feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and concerning whom He said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her."

"Let me entreat thee," said I to this person, who showed a very deep contrition for her past wicked ways, "if thou shouldst again be set at liberty, to return to thy ill courses no more. Ah, become not (as holy Scripture warneth) like the sow gone back to her 'wallowing in the mire,' nor any longer give the flower of thy young life, which should be of Christ's setting, for the devil's plucking."

"But *who*, master," cried she, eagerly interrupting me, her cheeks all wet with tears, "*who* will stretch out hand to help or succour such as me? The scornful city dames would count their mantles fouled, if in the street the borders of 'em brushed my sleeve."

"Take heart, poor wench," quoth I, "for there's One as yet ye wot but little of, who's strong and powerful enough, and, what's more, *willing* to save and shelter thee." Then, in the plainest, clearest speech that I could frame my lips to utter, I expounded to her the nature of the pardon God offers *all* men through His Son, and pressed it heartily upon her acceptance. "None, even the

vilest, need despair obtaining it," said I; "and as thou canst not read the blessed Word for thyself, I must tell thee that He bids a poor and stricken sinner attempt the doing of no hard matter, no slave's task, in coming to the foot of the cross—nought save the simplest, easiest, naturalest thing imaginable. Hearken to what He Himself says, '*Look* unto me and be ye saved.' Thou seest yonder streak of sunshine slanting bright against the wall of this our dreary prison?"

"Ay, master, I do."

"Even as ye regard that sunbeam with the eyes of your body would I have thee, through grace, look upward to thy Saviour. For He is God, 'and there is none else.'" And as the stung and dying Israelites gazed at the brazen serpent lifted high in the wilderness, and were saved, so, I trust, was this poor guilty creature brought regard Him of whom it was the type. "Moreover," continued I, "Jesus, who so freely shed His most precious blood for our salvation, after He hath once taken poor sinners into His love, will suffer none to pluck them out of His hand. Ye may feel sure that, having forgiven, He will continue to care for; and if all others cast thee off, *He* never will. Learn this little prayer I shall now teach thee—one which, when said from the heart (though evil folk tempt, and Satan may try), is sure to be answered. 'Tis short enow for thee to very well

remember ; yet so much to the purpose that Christ Himself commended it."

"Kind Sir, I'll learn, and gladly."

"Then hearken. All the words of it are these : '*God be merciful to me a sinner.*' Yet are they strong enow to make the gates of heaven open joyfully, for a penitent soul to enter."

And as the wench, all humbly and broken-heartedly, said them after me, I could not help thinking her prospect in this life, if she do get released from gaol, much like his who, despised by the haughty Pharisee, stood afar off, and "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven."

"Alack!" mused I, "there be they too proud of their good name and fame to bestow word of pity, or deed of compassion, on fallen outcast such as this. Yet *how* did the spotless Redeemer of mankind act by her prototype of old!" And at conclusion of our talk, I remember observing, "Now bear in mind the command of my divine Master, Jesus, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

"I'll pray the Lord, Sir," answered she, weeping, "that when I leave this place it may be with me even as ye say, to '*sin no more*,'" repeated she, very slowly, and thoughtfully.

I had writ my wife, and despatched my letters, according as I found opportunity, amid the rule, or rather *mis*-rule, of this gaol ; and though I gat no answer, I did not allow it unduly to weigh upon

my heart, reasonably enow concluding that the risk of her getting my letter safe was to the full equal to hers reaching me. Moreover, I felt comforted upon reflecting she was under the roof of a loving kinswoman; and kind Mistress Aylmer's parting word was, my wife should be tended as if she were her own daughter. Yet just about this time, strive as I might, I felt a gloomy sinking of the heart, a trembling prescience of coming woe, impossible to describe. Ah! what had become of the buoyant spirit, that wont so stoutly maintain there was a bright light hidden in the darkest cloud? but now the cloud of affliction hooded and wrapt my soul as in a mantle, and the light I could in nowise discern the gleaming of. Quoth I to myself, when alone with myself, "The only way by which I can combat these despairing thoughts is to 'pray without ceasing;'" and while I prayed, calling to remembrance the weakness and the necessities of they who were so wound around my heart as to have become the very life of its life, likewise my own forlorn estate, I shed tears, till this Scripture 'gan greatly relieve and comfort me, "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

A day or two afterward, on being locked up for the night, a letter was slipped into my hand, I could not see by whom. I was forced wait till day-break for light to read it; and during the

dark watches lay sleepless, grasping tightly the letter which I trusted would give me tidings of my poor family. Well might it then seem to me as if the "wings of the morning" were shorn of their swiftness, ere my straining eyes beheld the first unfolding of their brightness. At last the golden gates of day were opened, and I was able to decipher the superscription: "These for the worthy hands of the Rev. John Hicks." Alack! with a deep sigh of disappointment, I perceived 'twas not in the slender, delicate writing I so longed to see, but the clear round characters of good Master Hope instead.

I've ofttimes spoken of Master Hope's face, as reminding me of the truthful index to a right pleasant, genial book. Moreover, this our brother, in addition to a most happy natural disposition, hath, by the purity and consistency of his outward carriage, greatly set forth and recommended the beauty of a holy life and conversation in the eyes of they who are not believers. For these watch sharply the walk of such as have "professed a good confession before many witnesses." And if Christian professors stumble and fall into any heinous sin, like David, they may repent heartily, and be forgiven their "great transgression;" yet I do not think that erring brother, or erring sister, will again be made largely useful (save by way of example), or ought expect to hold the same place in the

Church of Christ on earth, as they do who have maintained a profession "without spot," and "unrebukable." The friends at Kingsbridge loved apply to him of whom I'm writing (in part, perhaps, because it bore reference to his fair earthly name) this Scripture—"Christ in you the *hope* of glory;" and while a-talking with Master Hope, I've more than once called to mind a story of an old-world king, who, after he had gotten a famous victory, divided the fruits of it among his followers: to one he gave whole countries, to another store of gold and jewels; at last they asked him what he meant reserve for himself. "The bravest treasure of all," said he. "And what, O Prince, may that be?" "Why, I will keep HOPE," quoth he. And verily this monarch thought to hope for that which would make him do whatever he was able to do, or any could think, was enow to fill even a soul as great as his.

Master Hope's letters are, in general, as faithful a reflex of his mind as a true mirror is of a man's face. Aforetime I've read some of 'em, which, if set among the leaves of my present jottings, would show there just as bright marigolds might in a bunch of sad and dismal rue. This, however, that he now sent me, was an exception, being fuller of lamentation, Master Hope said, than any he ever writ in his life before. And here is a page of it:—

"His worship, Master Beare, proveth so sore a

scourge to the Lord's people in Kingsbridge, that a good many of 'em will, ere long, be clean driven out o' the town. Some of the younger folk (Robin Cheke is one) bethink them of embarking, very shortly, for America, having had news of that brave land, which they liken to the receiving 'glad tidings of the kingdom of God' from a far country. Worthy Master Burdwood our enemies have plagued in such sort, that he hath been obligated leave his farm, and is now entertained (with his wife and some of his children) by a very godly person in the town o' Dartmouth. The crew of informers, at beck of Master Justice Beare, unhung his gates, rifled his house, seized and drove away his cattle, ripped the locks off his barn-doors; and poor Mistress Burdwood, and her young daughters, were forced seek shelter among the better-disposed of their neighbours. Master Beare's black horse (who, divers o' the ancient gossips affirm, hath in him somewhat of the evil spirit which possesseth his master), taking freely the road leading to Master Burdwood's, at all hours might his hoofs be heard galloping in that direction; and upon one of these occasions, the fierce stamping brute having cast a shoe, Master Beare ordered a certain smith to set it right, which he, in not a little bodily fear, having done, the wicked horseman getteth into further converse with him, and, finding this smith owed Master Burdwood a small sum of money, aviseth him never pay it;

and, worse still, become a party—which the person hath since done—in helping to ruin his benefactor. But 'the Lord God of recompences shall surely requite' these folk according to their deserts hereafter. I need scarce tell ye, Master Burdwood bore the coarse insults heaped upon him by his persecutors, with so admirable a patience, cheerfulness, and composure, that Master Beare's rude nature was greatly irked and mortified thereby. Our excellent brother took 'joyfully the spoiling of his goods,' praying God to forgive them who did it. Nought the new justice could do had power to make him forget that he was the servant and faithful minister of One who, when His enemies 'reviled Him, reviled not again;' neither, Master Hicks, did he fail comport himself with a dignity becoming the well-born gentleman he is, which chafed Master Beare hugely.

"*Postscriptum.*—A little dog belonging to young Mistress Burdwood happed, when the spies were lurking near her father's house—the family being at evening prayers—to thrust out his head, and bark at 'em, whereby a great mischief was wrought for they within. And the cruel strangers catching the poor little noisy rogue, treated him to a bit of hemp—the pretty maid herself finding him stark, and hanging from a tree-bough, in Master Burdwood's orchard."

After I had ended the reading Master Hope's

epistle, I could not help musing with much surprise over this circumstance, namely, how it came to pass his letter should find its way to me with the string and seal both unmeddled with; and, that which made the matter all the more remarkable, was its safe containment of a gold Carolus, which Master Hope, and certain kind souls beside, enclosed therein for my use; and I, knowing how oft they are without a crown themselves, exclaimed, "Truly the Lord hath his 'jewels' in that little town of Kingsbridge, none the less precious though they be hid; yea, high-headed folk might count them *buried* there. As touching myself, I can testify 'they oft refreshed me;' and now I am unrighteously cast into prison, and some of them are implicated in the issue of my coming trial, they yet remember, and minister, to my cruel want, and are 'not ashamed of my chain.'" Afterward I made discovery, these kind friends, being sorely puzzled how to get their help conveyed me, at length lighted upon an honest countryman going direct to Exon, who'd a sister married to one of the gaol turnkeys, and she prevailed with her husband to deliver me the letter, which (as before stated), in the darkness, he did, thus faithfully fulfilling the trust confided him; when, if otherwise minded, he might easily have defrauded me of it altogether. Now this man is of a forbidding countenance, and extreme surly carriage; unknown to myself, I'd

conceived a prejudice against him; conceiting sagely, so rough a shell must needs contain a very bitter kernel—in short, that nothing friendly or good might be hoped from such a quarter. But ye cannot always tell what o'clock 'tis in a man's breast by the dial of his face; and this person's worthy conduct towards myself has given me a new, and, I trow, clearer light whereby to ponder these words of the Apostle, "Charity *thinketh* no evil."

I'd many a time heard of the havoc disease maketh in gaols, and I knew if it should be the Lord's will to send "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" among us, Death, in our crowded, filthy cells, would prove a swift and fearful reaper. As it was, several of the prisoners were always more or less disordered. Here there is no provision made for sick folk, nor a ward for them to lie apart in; and now that which I dreaded came to pass. Scant, unwholesome food, foul air, and other dreadful miseries beside, proved too much for me, and I sank down upon my bundle of straw, overpowered by the fearful sickness of which they were the chief cause, that had already begun its awful ravages among the prisoners. But while stretched helpless on my straw, proving by experience the force and truth of those few simple, yet most moving words, "*sick, and in prison*," and expecting the hour was near approaching in which I must surely die, still, through God's mercy, before my senses forsook

me, I could from my inmost heart cry, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, *for whom I have suffered the loss of all things;* and do count them but dung so that I may win Christ."

And my heavenly Master forsook me not, in this my seeming last extremity. It pleased Him to awaken pity and compassion for my sad state in the hearts of some o' the gaol people; the hard-featured turnkey, anon I spake of, proving among the foremost; thus was I fetched back to life at the moment I appeared the nearest leaving it. After a while, my sound, healthful constitution prevailed over the fever; and though wasted to the shadow of my former self, in time, with help of a staff, I managed to crawl, feebly as a fly, alongside the wall of the gaol court-yard. Last week, as I was trying to catch the warmth of the little sunshine that could find its way there, I spied a coffin carrying out, and asking of they nearest me which of the prisoners was again dead, learned 'twas none other than the woman I'd held the converse with, already jotted down. As I watched the men bearing away her corpse (which, like the rest of they who died of this sickness, was to be buried in a church-yard outside the city walls), her own words returned with force to my mind—"God grant that when I leave this place it may be to *sin no more.*" And afterward, with feelings pen or tongue can ne'er describe, I

learned the poor wench died with the prayer I'd taught her, the blessed one of the publican, a-trembling upon her lips. Nor doubt I, her soul is numbered among theirs "who have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb."

Yesterday, the gaoler himself gave me another letter, which, when I saw 'twas superscribed by the feeble hand of Mistress Aylmer, my heart sunk with a fear dreadfuller than all other fears beside; at last I gathered courage to read its contents. My wife had been confined of a still-born child, and, though the kind old gentlewoman who wrote evidently dreaded to add "sorrow upon sorrow," I was given understand her recovery must be considered as very doubtful. Of the letters I sent, they'd received but two. "To our safe getting the last, under God's good providence" (said Mistress Aylmer), "do I ascribe the continuing of your poor wife's life; for nought (even *the voice of her children's weeping*) had power to arouse her languishing spirit, till, through mercy, that letter reached us."

As I was a-penning these last words, a very faint, prolonged swell of distant music (my sense of hearing was always exceeding nice and accurate) made me stop, and listen intently. I have resolved the meaning of yonder far-off sound. 'Tis the flourish of trumpets, announcing that the judges

appointed to try the prisoners are entering the city. And now, to Him whose very name "is a tower of strength, into which the righteous fleeth and is saved," do I all fervently commit a—perhaps dying—wife and helpless children. This haughty trumpet peal hath no further power to shake my heart, though a certain death-knell for many a trembling one beside.

Two days later.—(These following writ by me, eleven o' the clock at night, barely four hours after ending of my trial. LAUS DEO!*)*—Upon crossing the outer court of the gaol, on my way to the castle of Exon, at the hour appointed me, to stand my trial there, I found, anxiously waiting by the gates, those good friends already spoken of as accused (though in much milder sort) of being accessories to the crime whereof I was charged as being the chief perpetrator, and who, according to their several recognisances, now appeared at the assize. If put under the same indictment, I felt assured matters would not be pushed against them (their having been allowed get sureties had already shown it) half as severely as against myself. They were duly avised of the pestilent sickness in the gaol whence I was just taken; but no sooner did they espy me coming than, running forward, Enoch Trueman grasped both my hands, while ardent Master Hope, falling on my neck, could not forbear weeping; quoth another, "Dear Master Hicks, ye have indeed 'sorrowed much.'"

Alack! the last two months had done the work of many years upon my outward man. 'Twas a long time since I'd seen my visage in a looking-glass; yet their sad, pitying eyes, and the smothered words of surprise and grief that fell from their lips, told me, to the full as truly as any mirror, how greatly I must be changed in person.

Having neither inclination nor ability to describe, save in a general and cursory manner, the nature of a trial such as mine, which was conducted pretty much after the manner of many a similar one in these sad times—where infamous, perjured witnesses, who scruple not to gain a piece of bread by laying information against the innocent, affecting their characters as loyal subjects, and with what can be made out beside by the twisting and misrepresenting perhaps some simple word or action of the accused, or any other kind of presumptive evidence that can be fished up, do ofttimes enable a predetermined judge, and corrupt counsel, to influence a jury in obtaining from them the fatal verdict they desire—I shall hasten to say, that when placed at the bar, and the indictment against me was read, I answered "Not guilty," with a tongue which, God be thanked, never yet gave my conscience the lie.

Lo! the very first witness called was none other than our notorious adversary, Master Beare. The new justice bustled into court in his bravest attire, and with his usual insolent swagger, as he doffed

his hat—in the lace band of which was looped a great flapping feather—(he mightily affecteth the gentleman of figure, which, beside they of the true sort, only maketh him appear the more vulgar, for silken purse was never wrought out of a sow's ear)—and showed the coarse, bloated features of his broad red face, lit by eyes at once fierce and dull, yet with a leer of triumph in their wicked twinkle, when turning his regards in the direction where I was, which limner for the Evil One alone could fitly paint. Thus stood we twain before that large assemblage: *he*, the big, burly, prosperous justice, in his fine, glittering habit—I, wasted to a wan and meagre shadow, and for many a month no woman's gentle hand had done its best to make my miserable clothing decent. Yet, as I've said, when in this bad man's presence before, though outwardly so weak and wretched, yet felt I strong in the consciousness of an innocence both white and clean; and would not have been degraded by change of places with my adversary, for aught this world could offer in shape of recompence.

The questions put Master Beare by the counsel for the Crown, as well as his replies, were all that a heart of malice could possibly prompt lying lips to utter; and so carefully ordered withal, that I at once 'gan suspect a secret understanding between the parties, in order to the making my condemnation secure, and the punishment of those poor

souls alongside me in tribulation a very different matter to what, in their simplicity and country ignorance of law-courts, they had ever conceited it would be. And the Kingsbridge friends now and then giving a groan while the harsh voice of Master Beare was a-grating on their ears, just to mark their sense of his wickedness, the criers of the court called silence, and forthwith certain officials dealt them so smart a rap with their wands on the pate, that they being greatly confused thereat, the graceless folk around laughed out loudly, and this unseemly merriment received no check from those sitting in judgment upon us.

Joan Lucas was then produced, in her black hood and widow's garb; but she comported herself in so bold a manner, and with gest and speech so impudent, that most present knew nought, save free use of strong waters, could reasonably account for a carriage thus reckless and daring.

As her shrill scream, craving that "justice might be done upon the murtherers of her husband," ceased its sound, a man with a hat slouched over his eyes was heard say, "Well answered, daughter; we'll hang him yet."

Divers other evil evidence next followed. The chirurgeon, he who spake truthfully, what time the inquest on the body of John Lucas was holden, the powers of darkness had since been permitted tamper with; his replies, however, proved so

confused and contradictory, that he was quickly dismissed.

Over the coroner who presided on that most shocking occasion had likewise come an ugly change, he answering the counsel with a quaking tremulousness, as if afeard of some secret power, which coerced and held him in subjection. This man had neither the courage of virtue nor the hardihood of vice.

Those persons subpœnaed by the brethren present to give evidence were plied by certain lawyers (no secret being made as to which side they, the lawyers, belonged), and perplexed with their cunning, and browbeat by their insolence; for the wily questioners tried hard mislead and frighten these simple, honest natures; but, I joy to record, truth stood the test bravely, and the counsel failed to shake their testimony in our favour.

Faint by reason of my late sickness, I leaned wearily against the rail in front o' me. This weakness of body did seem affecting my intellectuals. Whatever natural powers I once possessed, now that most I needed 'em, appeared forsaking me; in this condition I was called upon for my defence. When I began to speak, many a fierce and frowning visage turned darkly toward mine. Had it been as in time past with me, how differently should I have proclaimed my own guiltlessness of murthering

a man who, I'm bold to say, I never in my life laid finger near (as well as theirs, accused by "them that plot iniquity" of aiding me in committing such crime), to what I then felt able! But, crushed and broken as I was, that which, through mercy, strength was given me to say, though of necessity exceeding brief, artless, and unstudied, produced no inconsiderable impression; yea, carried along with the simple earnestness of its appeal a conviction to the minds of the honestest present, that I, and my friends, were accused on the falsest, most unfounded of pretexts, by our bitter and merciless persecutors.

After I'd done, there was a great hush in the crowded court; it became so remarkable, that methought the ticking of a watch, or the fall of a pin, might have been heard in the silence. Judge Rainforde was about to deliver his charge. At first sound of this judge's voice, I lifted up my eyes (dulled and heavy as they had become) in sheer amazement; for it was so rarely musically sweet in tone, and withal persuasive, that as the silvery accents of his tongue melted on my astonished ear, I could scarce believe what I before heard reported, namely, that this judge was of nature so ruthless and cruel, the hangman and the strangling cord followed his appeals as surely, and as closely, as a wight's shadow doth himself. But full soon I discovered, though "his words were softer than

oil, yet were they drawn swords," and "the poison of asps was under his lips;" for this voice, in its depths so majestic, in its cadence and clearness so harmonious and perfect that not the smallest syllable was lost, which charmed men's ears as by a sorcerer's accurst enchantment, could yet control and awe, with a power so strange and terrible, that those of Squire Reynells, or Master Beare, when in their savagest of moods, would be impotent compared with it as the peevish crying of a froward child against the subtile one of him who said to our first mother, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good from evil." And there was the motley expectant audience, the keen-eyed lawyers in their gowns, the sheriffs and their men in the gorgeousest of liveries, the figure of Joan Lucas in her mourning garments, her bold, black, burning eyes, riveted upon the stately judge, while with outstretched neck she listed to him greedily, and against whom, I fear me, the soul of many a wretch cut off in a youth of sin, the tears and wailings of many a desolate widow, orphaned child, and heart-broken parent, will rise up at the day of doom. My blood ran chill, while reflecting upon the malignity, the desperate hard-heartedness of this man; thus corrupted by sin, yet endowed with natural gifts so extraordinary, all perfected too, as they were, by the highest training, art, learning, and experience can give: he minded me

of the fallen "Son of the morning," who, with his bright compeers, kept not their first estate; yet lost, everlastingly lost, and in perdition though they be, are, in the greatness and grandeur of their intellectual powers and capacities, angels (if of darkness), *angels still.*

Oh, with what fair seeming of truth and justice did this judge, in his summing up, remind the jury of each thing charged against us, yet how carefully omit, or set in light of such false likelihood (that I myself was startled by his close and subtile reasoning), the saving points which made for our defence! Lastly, with what an overmastering force of eloquence did he seek make the wrong appear the right, the worse the better, the innocent the guilty cause!

From an adversary so deadly and powerful, and altogether set against us, I considered my own sentence as already sealed, likewise feared that of my poor friends would be ruinously severe; but the God we serve, "in whose hands are the hearts of all men," at the very moment I had given up all earthly hope of being saved, saw fit, by a signal interposition of His sovereign will, to show that *He* could deliver us when we were inwardly exclaiming, Our souls are "among lions, among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue is a sharp sword." For the jury, after consulting a long

while together, returned with a verdict altogether the reverse of that which was expected—yea, confidently predicted by our enemies. Upon hearing the resolute "NOT GUILTY" of the foreman, I felt a certain dizziness, causing me to grope at what was nearest for support, while surrounding objects floated all formless and confused before my eyes; the buzz of angry murmurs, which arose from our disappointed foes, sounded in my ears as sounds the surge of waters to the drowning.

I know nothing further of what passed in court, but as soon as recovered out of the insensate condition into which, from bodily weakness, I'd fallen, and finding myself once more i' the blessed open air of heaven, I kneeled down and returned to the Lord solemn thanks for the merciful deliverance He had vouchsafed his servant,—likewise, that in England there were still left hearts of truth and honour, yea, they who will not suffer the blood of the innocent to be poured forth like "water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again."

Chapter XV.

OH, "THAT MINE ADVERSARY HAD WRITTEN A BOOK."

From my Lodging in Margaret-street, Westminster, this 20th of June, 1671.

SURELY no man ought feel firmer assurance than I, that each event in the lives of us poor mortals, be it in our eyes never so small, mean, and insignificant, is ordered and disposed by Him who has numbered even the very hairs of our head; all that is good must of necessity proceed from God, as naturally as a stream does from its parent source, and all that is evil, we are sure, is in absolute subjection to, and only permitted to serve His purpose, in the infallibility of whose divine wisdom there can be no error, when to mere human reason and intelligence its ways appear mysterious, its depths soundless. If, in this tumultuary lower world, I've had the hap

to pass, not without much damage, over divers treacherous quicksands and sunken rocks, while certain of my compeers, beginning life just when and *as* I did, have so trimmed and adjusted the sails of their barques as to sail in the very sleeve of earthly fortune and prosperity, I envy them not their boon voyage, though barely escaped another of those threatening reaches, which again was opening its black mouth to engulf me. Albeit I have, or as good, I trow, shot safely the danger that was pending; and methinks I can scarce use the leisure of this evening at mine inn, more to my satisfaction than in tracing, with pen and ink, a few more links in that chain of events unenlightened folk call destiny, but which a child of God knoweth, as I've before said, to be none other than so many manifestations of the over-ruling, ever-present agency of the Lord Himself. The particular circumstance which led to my coming hither, in manner altogether unforeseen by myself, I consider one of them. 'Twas passing strange; and I do seem, even now, more like a man in a dream than awake while reflecting upon it.

Immediately after my release from gaol, I journeyed, fast as love and fear could make a person in my exhausted condition, direct for the place where Mistress Aylmer liveth. The meeting between myself and family, in the greatness of its

joy, had yet a very affecting solemnity: for when my poor wife, looking more like the ghostly spirit than the bodily reality of a living woman, scanned my pale, altered visage, as in turn most sorrowfully I did hers, each felt how near the other had been to the crossing over the narrow boundary which parteth time from eternity, though our step had been stayed on its awful threshold. Even then it seemed to us as if we were still standing in *the shadow* of Death; but the Lord mercifully decreed that our children at the period of their lives when most a loving parent's watch is needed, should not be deprived of it.

I soon began reflect carefully upon a project whereby, under God's guiding providence, I meant shape my future course. It was to close with a proposition made me to join the little company of godly folk who have made arrangement to sail next month from the port o' Plymouth for New England, a colony which seems planted by the hand, likewise in a very peculiar manner blessed by the favour and protection, of the Almighty.

On sounding my wife's mind about leaving this the land of our birth and that of our ancestors for many a long-past generation, she made answer which, coming from one reduced to such weak, feeble condition, struck me as being not without a certain pious heroism, and for a woman very much to the purpose. "Dear husband, when we can

no longer live in our own beloved country but in such way as is worse than dying in it, I think God shows us the time is fully ripe for our leaving it."

"Amen," said I; "and though that to which we think of going may seem little better than a wilderness by comparison with this we are driven out from, yet shall we and our children find there the blessedest of all earthly privileges and enjoyments, namely, FREEDOM TO WORSHIP GOD."

Our eldest son being old enow to understand the subject we were discussing, I scrupled not tell him of that which I was a-meditating, for ever since my children have been able express their thoughts in language articulate, I've encouraged 'em without fear to pour their innocent confidences in my ear, and ofttimes these have refreshed and gladded my toil-worn spirit more sweetly than I know how to describe. Our young family, if composed of separate bodies, will yet, I humbly pray, in all important matters (*religious* especially), be found to have but one heart and soul. Ah, never do I see the blessing of God descending, or His Spirit resting like a tranquil dove in any household widely apart, and *divided*, in opinions of this kind, with near the same unction as where husband, wife, and children, dwelling together, prove of united mind in serving the Lord upon earth. To such heaven-bound families apply the words of the 133rd Psalm, as it can to none other, for on

them has "the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

My son, fixing his quick observant eye upon a chart lying before me, in which was depicted, not only the track of our sea-voyage, but the bearing of that portion of the land of New England where I designed settle, mastered the whole with an intelligence so clear and ready that I felt afraid I should grow proud o' my scholar, seeing he hath had no teacher save myself; and then the dear youth spake so modestly of his wish to be helpful to his parents, and his desire in some measure to requite all their loving cares for him, that my wife and I looked upon one another till our eyes grew moist. Truly, our hearts were full of gratitude to the Lord in bestowing on us, in our first-born, a child thus dutiful and towardly. I regarded him "even as a father the son in whom he delighteth," and, through God's preserving mercy, as one who will worthily "keep my name in remembrance" hereafter; but his mother laid her thin, pale hand (it looked all the paler and thinner by the contrast) upon his black, crisp, glossy curls; a tear stole slowly down her cheek—yea, such a tear as would have left no stain upon that of the most "blessed among women"—and her lips moved, though they uttered no sound. Then I knew the prayer which is above all prayers —a holy, faithful, tender mother's—was a-going

up to God on her son's behalf; nor doubt I the blessing thus piously invoked will descend copiously upon his young and comely head.

For my own part, I confessed to a feeling amounting almost to joyful certainty, that it would be greatly for my young family's future benefit this remove to that far land, I began contemplate as our future home; and, after what I had lately gone through in this country (whose future seemeth daily grow more overcast with clouds of doubt and gloom), the proposal I've referred to—for me and mine to leave it—was grateful to my spirit as is the rush of water to ear of a wretch spent with wandering through a parched and dreary desert. While pleading earnestly before the Lord for His guidance, protection, and more especially that it might be vouchsafed my feeble wife and younger children in this our greatest venture, the words, "God Himself shall be with them," came to my soul so like a comforting messenger of heavenly promise, that straightway the last shade of misgiving vanished therefrom.

Knowing several weeks must of necessity elapse ere the voyage could take place, I said, "My pen and ink shall not be idle during this quiet leisure interval." Accordingly, I filled a good portion of each day by framing and compiling an account of the grievous fines, exactions, and illegal prosecutions divers parties in this county have suffered and

been laid under for the steadfastness of their Non-conforming principles. If the names of the individuals who made themselves most busy in worrying and afflicting them were set down, still 'twas nought save a bare statement of facts — sufficient ugly and startling I grant, yet all unlike this little private note-book I carry about with me, and in whose artless pages I've talked with my pen as I would with my tongue to a very honest friend; but, upon reading over what I'd set down (the rough outer shell of these sad affairs, and nothing more), I could not, I confess, help exclaiming, "'Tis no wonder such things make godly folk cry out, in the language of David, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove; for then would I flee away.' 'Lo, then would I wander afar off, *and remain in the wilderness*.'"

Just as I was putting the last stroke to my work, three worthy persons from the neighbouring town, two of whom were brother ministers, calling to see me, and finding what I'd been engaged upon, asked permission to look over my performance, which, sooth to say, I was nothing loth grant. After they had done reading it, the oldest and gravest of 'em (a man of solid parts, and generally accounted much prudence) wanted show the writing to other of our friends, and I feeling tickled at the commendation implied therein, very willingly consented, and this being done, the brethren quickly

agreed among themselves that as it was a thing, as they conceited, like to do good service in the sacred cause we are engaged in, must need get it *printed*.

Yet, though my name, and the printer's also, were carefully withholden, the book gat freely circulated, and much talked about; in consequence thereof, the feathers of more than one evil human bird of prey were sorely ruffled. At length their suspicions pointed toward me as its compiler. With shame I confess, that when a rumour of these things was wafted me in my retreat, I heartily wished my over-active friends had deferred the printing of this pamphlet till there were some few thousand miles of tumbling water between me and my adversaries; but after a moment's reflection 'gan despise myself for entertaining so abject and mean a thought. Quoth I, "'Tis the truth, and nothing save the truth; and what Christian man ought feel afraid or ashamed to draw his pen in defence thereof? Now, out upon thee, John Hicks, for turning such a craven!" and with blushing cheeks I commenced singing, though I felt scarce worthy to do so, a verse of honest Christopher's prison rhymes—

> "Let timid hearts school prudent tongues,
> Their coward peace to hold;
> Lord grant that in *truth's* sacred cause
> I steadfast prove as bold."

An exceeding sweet, clear, youthful voice (I was

not 'ware of my eldest son being within earshot of the stave) joined mine, and sang the two last lines manfully.

At this particular juncture it fell out that our good cousin, who, as already noted, is a lone, aged widow, grew very anxious about the settlement of a small property in part connected with payment of her yearly jointure. The person chiefly concerned in the affair lives upon an estate not far from Exon, which once belonged to her late husband, Walter Aylmer; and she entreated me do what I could in the way of seeing her claim properly established. Right glad was I of this opportunity to show the excellent gentlewoman my gratitude for all her friendship and affection to us in our misfortunes; therefore I decided setting off without delay upon the business; but a journey of near threescore miles lying afore me, Mistress Aylmer would have me tarry till she'd first begged the loan of a horse from a neighbour, who thinketh more of his than many folk do of a poor relation. When, after some little hesitation, the widow made her request, wealthy Master Winterblossom answered thus, "My brown mare Phillis is, ye know, dame, reckoned *the* bravest roadster in the county; I'd fear trust the good wench in any other hands except my own, saving one pair, and they are Master Hicks's. 'A righteous man,' Mistress Aylmer, 'regardeth the life of his beast;' and I've

noted how careful over, and considerate he is to all dumb creatures, and with knowledge of their ways and nature; therefore tell him the mare is heartily at his service, ay, an it be for *a month to come.*"

Thus handsomely mounted, I set forth early on a Tuesday morning, fully purposing, through God's mercy, to return at close o' the week; and, being no mean horseman, performed my journey with all the ease and pleasure imaginable; its results proved satisfactory. I was very civilly entertained by the gentleman I waited on, and at end of a couple o' days free to travel homeward, with the back-standing arrears of Mistress Aylmer's jointure in my pocket, and the pleasing assurance that I'd been able effect what she desired, touching future payment of the same.

While trotting pleasantly along, I could not help comparing the difference between riding such a fine, well-conditioned, swift-paced creature as Brown Phillis, to plodding wearily a-foot, or striving after the uncertain chance of getting a seat among the bales on a pack-horse, if a string of such hap go by; and which seat I alway preferred to one in the heavy diligence, that rarely exceedeth four miles an hour, and is for ever meeting mischances, whereby the passengers are bruised and shaken horribly. Moreover, I felt within my veins the delicious sense of returning health and cheerfulness;

the year, also, was, to my mind, at its primest season, when the earth puts on her robe of many colours, and looks as youthful as she did near six thousand springs agone, with the blush of early summer on her tender leaves and blossoms, and the air breathes fresher, sweeter odours than art can ever hope to imitate. 'Twas in delightsome mood like this, I repeated, as I rode, the 128th Psalm, to every word of which, methought the bright and lovely scenes around gave back a glad response.

Going leisurely up a little ascent, I spied a pair of mounted travellers a good way on before. The horse of the elder of them proving somewhat lame, and that of the other a hard-mouthed brute, with a head like a camel's—but none of that mild Eastern slave's obedience and knowledgableness inside o' it—I soon overgat them, and they very civilly accosting me, I slacked my pace, and we fell into a discourse touching the road; upon their asking a few questions concerning it, I readily gave them all the information I could, finding they were bound in the same direction as myself. These new acquaintance were well equipped in long riding-coats and boots, and the younger had a silver lace about his hat. There was nought in the least soldier-like about the mien or bearing of either. I set them down as belonging to a peaceable profession, perhaps that of a city scrivener and his clerk; and being a solitary traveller, with another person's

money in charge, I was not altogether sorry (thieves being grown mighty plenty and daring of late), to find myself in company with two such pleasant, civil gentlemen. He upon the hard-mouthed horse complaining how the ill-contrived beast strained his arms, naturally fell a-praising and admiring the sleek, graceful, and very handsome creature on which I was mounted, just at that moment pacing daintily as if she trod on eggs, laying back her thin, fine, small, light ears, and every now and then giving her head a little scornful toss, for all the world like proud, silly human folk do, when they conceit themselves demeaned by being thrust into company with those they count their inferiors.

Soon after, we arrived at a mean hamlet, and perceiving, amid the cluster of cottages, one with the sign of a bush over the door, and horse-block projecting deep into the road, we decided to rest, and refresh ourselves and horses, at this poor house of entertainment. The folk o' the place seemed cleanly and obliging, and the hostess readily agreed furnish us a dinner of eggs and bacon.

"But I will first go to the stable," quoth I, "and see to the mare's corn and water myself," which accordingly I did, she giving short, grateful neighs of approval, all the while I was a-tending her.

Upon re-entering the low-raftered kitchen of the hostelrie, with its wide fire-place of the time of Queen Bess, where a pan of savoury rashers was then in full sputter, the good wife begged show me into a little room, divided off from this the principal apartment; and there I found my new friends, with a tankard of ale and bread and cheese before them. To these viands were quickly added the smoking rashers and fresh eggs, when immediately I took it upon me to say grace. After having done so, the elder of the two gentlemen craved liberty to ask if I was not a parson, for such he could scarce help conceiting me. I answered briefly in the affirmative; and our ride having made us hungry, question and answer seemed alike forgotten, till we had done ample justice to our simple fare. Then, he who ventured the inquiry thus 'gan resume his questioning:—

"I think you said, Sir, that you belonged to the Church?"

"Ay, and truly," answered I, wiping my lips.

"Your whole appearance, ay, very garb, though without bands, sufficiently tokens your orthodoxy," pursued the friendly stranger, pushing the tankard towards me.

Now, my appearance, as far as a suit of clothes went, was just that of a curate with seven pounds a-year salary; and I felt a little surprised at my coat, the same my good wife has mended so often,

being taken as evidence decisive of the soundness of my creed.

"But," proceeds my gentleman (without giving me time to reply), "those canting scoundrels of Nonconformists, scattered all over the country, who have of late given our admirable Lord the Bishop such trouble, still some o' 'em insolently affect the clerical habit, yet a practised eye can easily discern the varlets under their false colours. Don't you think they deserve to lose their heads as well as their ears, which latter a good many (serve 'em right, too) have already done, for the pother and disturbance they make?"

Here, opportunely enow for me, our host made his appearance with a bottle of wine; and the attention of the travellers was thereby drawn off from the surprise and consternation, I doubt not, painted in my look, sufficiently strong to betray me.

"May I be so bold," said the younger of this precious pair, after the cork had been drawn, "to ask if ye're going as far as the town o' Plymouth?"

"Not quite," replied I, rather inadvertently, for I was thrown off my guard by the sudden discovery I'd made of the sentiments of my companions.

"Yet, possibly (if ye belong to that part), ye may be able give us some inkling of *information* touching a person now harbouring in the neighbourhood?"

"You were right, gentlemen, in supposing me a minister, but are very wide the mark in conceiting me an informer," quoth I, sharply.

"Nay, be not in a huff; all we designed civilly inquire is, know ye aught of a certain Master John Hicks, sometime vicar in the Church, with a very pretty living, too; but the fool chose become a separatist and schismatic, and my Lord Bishop judgeth him a more than commonly troublesome fellow."

"The person ye ask about, if I mistake not," said I, carelessly, though my pulse beat a quick measure, "was set free from Exon gaol this last assize."

"The very same," cried both, in a breath.

"And I'll warrant," quoth one of the apparitors (for such they were), feeling in his pocket for something which looked like a roll of vellum, with a seal attached thereto,—"I'll warrant he'll ere long be clapped up again. Look ye, master, *here's* his mittimus" (just showing me the end of the parchment); "and this time *I* take upon me to prognosticate he'll not be let off, seeing how greatly my Lord the Bishop is incensed against him. For this Hicks was no sooner at liberty than he must need ply his pen in lieu of his brawling tongue, and hath writ—ay, printed too, forsooth—a book full of scurril, treasonable matter against his superiors."

Then they fell a-reviling me as so active and

dangerous an enemy to King, Church, and State, that I, on their stopping to draw breath, said drily, "Methinks, gentlemen, ye make John Hicks of far more importance than he really is; 'twould be rather difficult, I conceit, to prove *his* power, supposing he had the will, to disturb a whole kingdom."

"Sir, ye underrate the mischief; did I not tell ye this cockatrice hath *writ a book*, and what's more than can be said of some, 'tis one that folk read, by which means the poison is spread far and near. My lord ever abhorred these scribbling rogues as the worst of the entire pestilent lot. John Hicks' offence requires a notably sharp punishment; but he'll get his deserts, little fear o' that."

"And with all my heart, in a matter like this," said I, cheerily, "I trust he may. Now, by your leave, gentlemen" (rising from my seat), "I'll just step out and see how my mare is getting on."

"And we, worthy Sir, will quickly follow."

"Don't hurry yourselves," quoth I.

"Our road," cried they, "lying much in the same direction, by all means let us ride together."

Making straight for the stable, I nimbly saddled and bridled Brown Phillis, looking with special care to the saddle-girth. Then stroking her silken cheeks, I said, while she turned her dumb, lustrous eyes mildly upon me, "Approve thyself true to a friend in need o' thy help, wench; for I perceive a

very different journey stretching its length out before me and thee to what either of us conceited this morning."

The son of mine host then making his appearance, I gave him money enow to pay my full share o' the reckoning; and as he was a-thanking me for't, the two worthies I'd left in the little hostelrie made their appearance.

"Why this haste?" cried they, running forward; "we'd be loth to lose your good company."

"But I am more than well content to be quit of yours, gentlemen," answered I, setting myself firmly in the saddle. "Sirrah, let go!" I exclaimed, looking very stern, and holding up my riding rod, for the younger and most active had laid his hand on the mare's bridle.

"This man hath the megrims in his head. Mayhap he'd behave more civilly if he knew *what* we are," said they, looking at each other in amaze.

"Ah," quoth I, "that I've already discovered, likewise the cruel business ye're bound upon, for of yourselves ye bewrayed it; though by the Lord's help and mercy John Hicks shall escape your clutches even 'as a bird from the hand of the fowler.' Did ye not say ye were a-going in search of him? Take another, and what I trust will prove a farewell look, my masters, at *me*."

With desperate fury the two apparitors tried to keep back the mare, shouting lustily for the

astonished folk of the hostelrie, to help unhorse me, on which I dealt them a few smart cracks a-piece with my cane, and jerking the reins out o' reach of the hands striving to grasp 'em, away flew Brown Phillis at a pace which seemed mocking the wings of the wind to follow. As if by instinct, she retraced the road we had travelled that morning; for the generous docile creature appeared fully comprehend the nature of the service I required her perform, and would have continued her marvellous speed till fairly spent; but I, knowing how badly mounted the foe left behind were, felt certain the pursuit could not be a very hot one, therefore after a time drew bridle, and continued gently trot her, while I cogitated the possibility of putting in practice a resolve gendered by a sudden motion which had risen in my mind, during that short interval elapsing between my rising up from table in the little room of the inn, and saddling the mare in the stable.

For I must here observe the danger I was then fleeing was not the first of the same kind (though *this* seemed much more pregnant with evil) I'd met with in my life before. During my sojourn at Kingsbridge, the Bishop's Court oft harassed me by their citations: a cheerful spirit and courageous heart stood me good stead on most of those occasions; moreover, the times were not so wholly overcast with gloom and fraught with danger then

as now, and kind friends generally contrived give me a seasonable hint, what day it would be prudent for me to absent myself.

On one occasion, however, a bishop's messenger arrived, when, having received no previous warning, I was in my own house. Making his errand known to some of the townsfolk, he was by them gravely avised, "Take heed how he meddled with Master Hicks; for let us whisper ye," said the sly rogues, "he hath not only a stout heart, but a sturdy oaken staff to boot, and a strong arm to use it."

The man laughed scornfully, came straight to my dwelling, and knocking at the door, inquired for me. Down I went, and it so happened had in my hand a stiff walking-cane. Regarding him by no means unkindly, I briskly inquired his business.

"It lies with Master John Hicks, *gentleman*," replied the messenger.

"Then I am he, friend; for every true Christian brother, be his possession in this world never so little, *I* hold a gentleman," quoth I, adding pleasantly, "and he now standing afore ye is a poor, unworthy minister of the blessed Gospel as well."

The apparitor was a person of tall stature, and exceeding stalwart, powerful frame, far more so than myself; yet, while thus quietly answering his question, I perceived his face change colour, till it became of an ashen hue, and he 'gan tremble, like

a wight struck with deadly fear and horror. To my inconceivable and altogether unutterable amazement, I saw this man (who was come for the express purpose of apprehending me), after throwing another glance of terror upon my countenance, just as if he'd seen a Gorgon, turn away in haste, and I never again beheld him afterward.

The inexplicable nature of the circumstance I can give no reasonable explanation of whatsoever, and as I gat not the slenderest clue to help me thereto, it must remain among those mysterious dealings of Providence more than once exercised for my immediate personal preservation, of which I dare not attempt the solvement; yet am I very certain there is nothing repellant or forbidding in my natural, ordinary aspect. On my carefully interrogating my wife, who knoweth each change of my face better than any other human being can, if, in all the time we've lived together, she had ever seen it wear a look. "*A look*," quoth I, solemnly, "dreadful enow to fill a fellow-creature with lively emotions of dread and terror." The bare conceit of the thing moved her to mirth in such degree that her only answer was a burst of gentle laughter; perceiving, however, I was quite in earnest, and likewise a kind of awe imprinted on my features, she in turn 'gan question me, and was even more struck than myself by the singularity of this remarkable occurrence, for the cut of my face, especially when I smile, pleaseth young children

mightily; ay, very shy little stranger-folk I've known affect my company hugely; and I, remembering that "of such are the kingdom of heaven," love theirs most dearly; moreover, as I've somewhere said before, all dumb creatures, yea, they whose natural instinct warneth them to shun mankind as their greatest enemies, I've known put confidence in me—birds soon learn feed securely from my hand, and once I mind, as I was a-walking in the fields, a hare, hard pressed by her pursuers, fled along my path. The poor, frighted, harmless thing stayed her course for a breath, lifted her wild eyes to mine, and, with a cry that filled my soul with pity, leaped direct into my arms for shelter, nor would I suffer her be torn from thence; and it gave me no mean degree of pleasure to feel the soft subsiding of the timorous creature's heart (which at first did seem as if it would have burst its fur clothing) against my own doublet.

But to return to that sudden motion, I firmly believe of the Lord's special sending, which, like an arrow of light, shot across my bewildered brain, and seemed to point, as might the finger of a guide, the direction I had best take, namely, without a moment's dallying hesitancy to ride straight to London; and, safely gotten there, wait upon a certain nobleman, a pretty near family connexion of my own, on the side of my sainted mother, whose niece he had married. I knew this Lord Haverford was a member of the

Privy Council, and likewise reported high in favour at Court. "And if," mused I, "through his influence I should gain admission to the presence of the King, my suit, by His blessing who is the Ruler of princes, will not be rejected; nay more, the King shall learn from a truthful, if not a courtly tongue, the wrongs inflicted upon, and the sufferings borne by, us his Majesty's loyal and faithful subjects in the west; and that these flagrant doings are now committed openly, by they who, instead of being true delegates, are surely foul abusers (at least I would fain *still* hope so) of the authority entrusted them as magistrates, by virtue of his royal commission. Moreover, the strong assurance vouchsafed me from on high, touching my present enterprise, made me resolve follow this leading of Providence with implicit reliance, feeling neither doubt nor fear concerning the issue of it; and I, therefore, directed my course accordingly.

Arrived at Exon, I judged it prudent seek a tavern as much in the outskirts of the city as possible; the brave mare, though she had gone more than fifty miles that day, had never turned a hair, and I intended pursuing my journey at sunrise. Having found a place of entertainment that suited me, and been furnished with all needful accommodation, I, ere I betook myself to rest, drew out my pen and inkhorn, and, procuring some paper, writ two letters: the first to my wife, shewing how well

I'd sped with good Mistress Aylmer's business, and then the strange misadventure that had imperilled my liberty, as I was a-thankfully returning to them; how, through God's overruling mercy, I'd thus far clean escaped the pending danger and its miserable consequences, and the sudden resolve I'd come to in consequence thereof; moreover, the comfortable assurance received from the Lord, that *all would be well* with me, whatever the result of the journey I'd undertaken might prove. The other was to worthy Master Winterblossom, in which I told him I was, greatly to my sorrow, like go near making good his permission* touching the mare; yet I trusted, within the time he'd named, to restore that admirable creature to the hand of her good master, ne'er a whit the worse for her travels.

Having tied and sealed my letters, I directed 'em, under cover, to a very honest hosier at Plymouth, whom I could rely upon, that, when he saw my writing, would lose not a moment in hasting deliver them to my wife. I gave this packet, next morning, as I was a-leaving the inn, to the care of the buxom, cheerful hostess, for her face bespoke a nature at once shrewd and kindly. She readily agreed despatch it by the post, which would start about noon that day, and, further, refused the piece of silver I offered, while conjuring her to be mindful of her promise.

The long string of pack-horses which go weekly

between Exon and Bristol had left the former the day previous, yet I overgat them ere they were a third way on their journey. These patient, docile, serviceable brutes are of a size, strength, or knowledgableness, to mind one of the rare marvels told of elephants and camels by travelled folk who've had the hap to visit far-off countries. When I came up with them, the sun being very hot, and the good beasts weary, the drivers were resting awhile under the cool, fresh shade of some trees, in a spot which, were I given to poetics, I'd select for subject of an idyll; neither should it lack a fitting hero, albeit he was old and gray. The country here lying afore me extended far as the eye could measure, in a wide, open range of land, seemingly bounded by nought, save the meeting of earth and sky together, diversified with woods, corn-fields, pastures, rich in flocks and herds, with clusters of distant cottages; a gray church-tower rising in their midst, and, nearer, the turrets of a stately castle, its bridge down, and battlements reflected in the moat, filled by the river, that wound along by those stern walls, and which, now lost to sight, then sparkling out again amid the beauteous landscape, for ever and for ever went on its way rejoicing.

While gazing delightedly, and repeating softly those words of the Lord to Jerusalem—"I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream,"—I spied an old

man, of brisk carriage, and exceeding hale, comely countenance, coming toward me. In one hand he held a stick, of knotted thorn, with a long crook at the end, in the other a half-knit woollen stocking, and by his side was a rough-coated dog, whose eyes were more observant, and, I was just a-going to write, better informed with sense, than those in the heads of many folk of human kind.

"Methinks," quoth I to the old man, "methinks a shepherd's life" (pointing to the flocks, feeding so peaceful in the sunny distance) "must be a mighty pleasant one."

"In summer weather 'tis, Sir," replied he, cheerily.

"I take it," said I, "that you're a shepherd yourself."

"Ay, many and many a year I've kept sheep among yonder hills and plains, with other farm work atween; and let me tell ye, master, a shepherd's life, in the bitter blasts and snow-storms of winter, is not so mighty pleasant as ye town gentlefolk" (and he smiled at me), "sitting upon a daisy bank in the sunshine, most-times conceit it must be."

"Your face, however, honest friend, is a brave witness in its favour; for such a healthful visage, with its white hairs for a crown, doth a man's heart good to look upon."

"Say ye so?" answered the shepherd, with another

cheery smile. "Now, at what age might ye reckon me to be?"

"Well, ye said ye'd kept sheep these pretty many years, so I'll guess full threescore, or" (taking a sharp survey of him) "mayhap a few years more."

"A few years, in truth, master, for as such to me they seem, and yet how wide the mark ye've guessed, for I've seen five instead of threescore summers pass over my head. By our church book, I was a hundred years old last Christmas day."

"Then 'faith, gaffer," cried one of the pack-horse men, who joined us while we were a-talking, and heard these last words, "I think I'll turn shepherd myself. Come, take a hearty sup o' this" (drawing forth a certain leathern bottle, which, for better convenience and security, the driver carried strapped to his girdle); "the good liquor will warm thy ancient blood, and make thee feel growing young again."

"Nay, thank ye kindly," said the shepherd, rejecting firmly the proffered bottle, "I'll none o' it, for ever since I was a boy my drink hath been the same as Adam's was in Paradise—water, pure, blessed water, *and nought else*. Yet, methinks, friend, my cheeks are still near as ruddy as (craving your pardon) the tip o' your own nose is."

"Water's well enow in its way," replied the

other; "'tis excellent to wash a horse's legs, or the grime off a body's face, or the cook-wenches to boil their pots with; but for a grown man to drink—ugh! I that am the wrong side o' forty—ye're laughing, old Sir, and I grant *ye* may; but as I was a-going to say, *I* begin feel I want something to cheer and strengthen my inwards. Man, after all, is a kind o' animal, that——"

"Right!" exclaimed the shepherd, very quickly interrupting him, and then pointing his crook with much meaning towards the pack-horses—(it joyed me see what care their masters took o' 'em, stroking their great necks, and carefully examining their huge feet, than which I conceited a mammoth's could scarce tread firmer)—and these now having had their good feed o' corn, were drinking gratefully from a clear runnel near the road-side. "Ye see," pursued the shepherd, "there's nought lacking in the way of strength or sinew in the brave legs and mighty shoulders of they true water-drinkers a-quaffing yonder stream."

"Was ever the like o' that heard afore?" cried the driver. "Now, shame upon ye, to even the palate and stomach of a pack-horse, for such is your drift, with the inside of a Christian."

"Nay," quoth I, "ye mistake. Our friend here was only speaking of there being neither lack of strength nor power in the noble beasts that have thus far brought ye and their heavy loads in safety,

though their drink be nought save water. And I'll warrant many a useful thing hath he gathered up during his long out-o'-door life, in observing the changes of the weather and the seasons, and divers other matters, beside the ways and habits o' the dumb things about him, for these last are never false to the instinct God hath planted in them as a guide to their meaner natures."

"Use plainer speech, master," said the shepherd, who was listening attentively. "I'm but a simple herdsman. Now, what meant ye about God's a-planting?—faith, I've lost the word, 't had a cracked sound."

"Just this," was my reply, "that the Lord, in His wisdom and mercy, hath seen fit to give even beasts a certain kind of sense, and though they use it without reason, it never leads 'em wrong."

"Ay, ye may well say so; yea, 'tis my belief, venture more than that concerning some o' 'em. Why, here's this dog o' mine; he knoweth the face of each sheep in our flock as well as I do, though to eyes like yours they might seem as much alike as one pea is to another; yet they all differ. An' I might tell of things beside, which, unless ye'd seen as I've done, ye'd ne'er believe a pate like this" (and the shepherd laid his hand lovingly upon the dog's head) "could get knowledge of. He hath a tongue, too, in it, that never told a lie; and I wish all servants, from they who wait upon our gracious

King downward, were as true to *their* masters as mine is to me."

"What children have ye living?" asked I.

"Ah, master, that's the saddest part of an old, very old man's tale; for most-times, such as reach my age see those they hoped would lay their gray hairs in a quiet grave, go thither afore 'em. Once I had wife, and goodly sons, and blooming daughters; but all, all are gone. Yet, sometimes, when I'm out in the fields alone, their faces smile around me; though when I speak they fade away, as does the morning mist upon the hills. I'm apt forget, Sir; 'tis more than fifty years agone since I beheld some o' 'em in the flesh." And then I saw a look come into his eyes which told of tears for the long-buried dead, that never again might flow—he'd no more left to shed.

"Thine age, good friend," said I, after a few remarks touching the great, and, I trusted, heavenly change so close awaiting him, to which he meekly and very reverently hearkened, "is, I hope, well tended."

"Ay, never an old man's better," answered the shepherd, smiling, "and by the hands of a good, loving grandchild. Might I make bold, gentle Sir, to ask ye go along with me to my cottage; 'tis bare half-a-mile from here?" and he pointing his stick in the quarter where it lay, I discerned a low roof of warm, brown thatch, peeping out like a nest from the trees near it.

I felt grieved I mustn't think of accompanying him thither, and after we had bidden each other a fervent God-speed, I turned me twice to watch this ancient shepherd a-wending his homeward way. 'Twas then I first perceived his shoulders were a trifle bent, in a way not unlike the slight stoop thought peculiar to scholarly men, ofttimes before *they* have reached to middle age. The locks beneath his wide-brimmed hat were still abundant, and white as the driven snow; but his firm step, and, in short, entire carriage, as he walked leisurely onward in the direction of the cottage, set me a-thinking very seriously whether pure water to drink, plain food to eat, fresh country air, a sober, industrious life, a patient, disciplined spirit, and, above all, a heart reconciled to God, is not the true philosopher's secret for lengthening out man's days upon earth.

On parting company with the pack-horse train, I pursued my journey with renewed spirit, finding not much difficulty in gaining what information I needed, touching the road, from other decent travellers, most of 'em like myself on horseback, or civil wayside folk a-foot; likewise suitable entertainment at the inns of the divers towns and villages (the names of half which I forget, and the other 'tis bootless jot down here) through which I passed; but more than once I'd the hap to arrive in the very nick of time a heavy-loaden diligence

was overturned, and all its flustered, crumpled passengers cast with their goods about the King's highway, in a mighty clamour and tumult of confusion, the poor souls making a noise more like a flock of gabbling geese when affrighted than anything else to which I can compare it. And well they might clamour, seeing few escaped these distressful upsets without getting ugly bruises, and some much worse hurts than bruises. Though it hindered me sorely—and for the pressingest of reasons I'd not a minute to spare—I alway lighted down, and lent a helping hand to these unhappy wights, and then pushed forward with speed.

'Twas after assisting the last time to pick up the stunned folk of a diligence, that Brown Phillis, cantering easily along, all of a sudden gave a short quick neigh, and then shied a very little (the good beast never started) at some near object. I, at the same time, hearing a rusty creaking sort o' sound, looked sharply around me, and lo! hard by us, was a tall black gibbet, from which swung slowly the rotting corpses of two robbers hanged in chains. The night had begun to close, and a chill wind swept over the face of the earth; it made the rusty irons give forth the creaking sound I've noted, and fluttered the dead men's rags, bestowing such ghastly semblance of living motion, as made me hastily give the mare a "hint," which she as readily

obeying, bounded forward fast as her fleet strength could carry her.

After a breathing gallop we fell into a gentler pace, and I, gazing up at the heavens, perceived the moon and stars coming forth in all their silent beauty. The sight seemed stay the sick loathing of my spirit. "'The eyes of the Lord,'" mused I, "'run to and fro in the earth;' He regardeth all creatures who have the breath of life, both the evil and the good, and without His knowledge and permission thieves and murtherers cannot be doomed suffer punishment for their iniquities,"—and with this I repeated the 10th Psalm.

But of all "perils by land" throughout my journey, the chiefest I encountered was when a-nearing the end o' it, in crossing a wide, bare, heathery tract of waste common, exceeding drear and desolate to view. The landlord of an inn, a few miles distant from this place, kindly warned me of the danger, as a single traveller, I ran of being stopped, plundered, perhaps murthered by thieves, and would fain have compelled me stay till either the heavy diligence came up, or some nobleman or gentleman's equipage, to which I might attach myself for better chance of safety; but I, knowing the diligence had lost both its hinder wheels, and must stay to get them righted, and that perhaps three or four days might pass ere the coach and outrides of a family of quality

arrived, determined on braving all risks, "For the Lord's eye will be on His servant in the midst of yon wild plain, as much as it is here in this snug shelter," thought I; and the thought gave me courage to ride over two-thirds of a way in such fearful ill-repute, without a single misgiving.

As, however, I was a-trotting by a clump o' stunted fir-trees, out started, pistol in hand, three stalwart rogues, their faces covered with black masks, and in the distance I spied a couple more, mounted on powerful horses, hasting toward me. Now, I never carry any weapon, save a walking staff or oaken riding-rod; for had I the hap to kill a fellow-creature, even in self-defence, the notion of sending a soul, all sudden and unprepared, to its last account, would make me wretched; yea, I'd just as lief be slain myself. Therefore, my only chance of escape lay in the mettle and swiftness of the brave creature I bestrode; but Brown Phillis seemed scent the exact nature of the danger which beset us. With a curve quick as lightning, she avoided the first rush of my assailants, and then, with marvellous leap ('twas well I had learned how to sit a horse properly), clearing an ugly kind of embankment on our left, slacked not her wonderful speed till she'd brought me fairly into the skirts of a little straggling town, where I harboured safely that night. Yet the mounted robbers chased us full ten miles, and the horse

of one o' em was able keep even my flying mare in sight. Moreover, these villains fired repeatedly, and though their murtherous balls hit neither myself nor the mare, one went direct through the crown of my beaver; but the Lord suffered not a hair of His servant's head to be hurted.

'Twas near noon o' the day following this encounter, that, gazing eastward, I discerned, through a filmy haze spread all over that part the horizon, the thrice welcome sight of spires and towers, with peaked roofs and chimneys, of what did seem to me a countless number of houses, while a sound, at first faint and uncertain, swelled gradually fuller and more distinct upon the ear, as I drew nearer the famous city that may be called the heart of this brave kingdom.

Now, when I was in London seven years agone, I had found excellent accommodation at a house of entertainment for travellers, kept by very sober folk in the purlieus of Westminster; the ravages of the great fire—which hath turned near half the old town (mightily, methinks, to its improvement and beautification) into a new one—reaching not hither. I found the good people o' the house I remembered and sought, alive and hearty, though neither so noted nor wealthy as they might easily have become, had they conformed, like some of their neighbours, to the loose ways and doings of the gay, lawless times in which they live. Yet

have my honest friends of the "Rose and Garter," in *thus* choosing, acted well and wisely, for at the end of the reckoning ill-gotten gains are sure never to prosper.

Suffice it to say, here I was readily furnished, and at moderate charge, with all that a man, putting up at a quiet ordinary, can reasonably desire. After settling myself in these good quarters, I brushed carefully the dust from my garments, penned a brief letter, and then, without loss of an hour, sallied forth in the direction where stood the almost princely mansion of the Earl of Haverford.

Though London, by the multitude of new buildings a-going on, and streets laid out in place of those destroyed, is marvellously changed, I had no trouble in finding the well-known residence of him I was about seek interview with. The big red-faced porter, of whom I inquired if his lord was in, at first eyed me coldly, and rather suspiciously, and, I shrewdly surmise, was about give a flat denial to this question. On taking, however, a second and more attentive look at my countenance, a good deal of surprise, mingled with no little curiosity, became expressed in his own; and most civilly he prayed me enter his lodge and state my errand. I answered by handing him the missive I'd prepared (I knew enow of the ways of town menials to give a piece of money along with it), and said I would wait the issue of its delivery.

After short space, a page, richly habited, appeared, saying he was come with orders from his master to conduct me to his presence immediately. On hearing this, the round eyes of the fat porter dilated wider, and making me a most respectful obeisance, at the same time craving pardon for his presumption, he said my face struck him as being so like—the man paused a moment sorrowfully—so like his late noble lady's that he felt certain I must be near related to her.

"A *poor cousin*, in truth, friend," quoth I, smiling sadly, as I followed the page into the hall.

Lord Haverford and I were still youths when last we parted under my father's roof, and I thought he would scarce recognise me; but I was mistaken. On the first step of the grand staircase stood the Earl, holding my letter in his hand, and after darting a keen, momentary glance at my person, grasped both mine, with a warmth and cordiality exceeding grateful and re-assuring to a man in my then most uncertain and misfortunate condition. As at his gracious bidding I entered a gorgeous saloon, I could not help contrasting the wide difference in our respective worldly circumstances —*he* rich, noble, living in splendour; *I* poor, oppressed, just set free from a gaol, and, under God's mercy, trusting to the favourable exercise of his influence with royalty to shield me from the

threatening horrors of another, perhaps more terrible, more fatal imprisonment.

Lord Haverford peremptorily refused hear aught of the business that had brought me thus unexpectedly before him, till I had partaken of what appeared to me like a kingly banquet, served upon silver and the rarest porcelain; but the dainty viands and choice wines were tasted by me only out of complaisance to the wishes of my noble entertainer. I longed so greatly disburthen myself of the communication I'd to make, that naturally I seized the very first opportunity which offered for this purpose.

At length the Earl consented listen to my woful relation; and after I had stated my late alarming adventure with the apparitors of the Bishop, and the storm of episcopal fury like to break upon me in consequence of the pamphlet I writ being—unawares to myself—made public, Lord Haverford observed,—

"You are on the horns, cousin, of a dilemma, and a more than ordinarily awkward one; yet they shan't gore you to the death, if I can help it; though what you've just been telling me proveth to demonstration the truth of a certain old wiseacre's maxim: 'From them whom I trust, God defend me; from them whom I trust not, I will defend myself.' This trouble your imprudent, busy, Puritan friends have so near been a means of

dragging you into, will, I foresee, require some skilful management to get you well through with; for that party," continued the courtier (he had received accurate information of the circumstances which led to my resignation of my living, and joining the Nonconformist Separatists from the Church Episcopal), "that party you, in my humble opinion, so unwisely chose cast lots with, grow daily more and more obnoxious to certain personages whose influence is weighty in the council-chamber of the King, who is of too easy a temper to much trouble his royal head about other men's wrangling and disputations (especially religious ones), provided they presume meddle not with his own personal concerns. The Court is now at Tunbridge, but will return to St. James's in four or five days hence; till then, good kinsman, ye must perforce consent make this poor house of mine your home."

With respectful thanks, I steadily persisted in declining this last proffered courtesy. The sumptuous palace which my lord, with some little affectation, called his "poor house," with the throngs of gay and splendid company perpetually arriving to pay their respects to its courted, powerful master (during our private talk, what a number of these painted butterflies had gathered in the ante-chamber), would grievous ill-suit the complexion of mind of a poor, hunted

Nonconformist minister. "But I'll not fail, my lord," said I, rising, after I had (nearly at the risk of giving him offence) at last succeeded in waiving his hospitable endeavours to overcome what he called, laughing, my "scruples of conscience,"—"I'll not fail to appear again shortly, though in you I feel I've not a patron like those their petitioners need remind till they grow weary, sick of hope deferred touching fair promises that mean—"

"Exactly what they're worth," interrupted he, "which is NOTHING. No, no, John Hicks, this I've made I'll keep for sake alone of my dead Lucy, whose beautiful face the cut of yours, though a care-beat, middle-aged man, so strangely resembleth, as well as that sweet lady, my wife, was thought so much like thy own gentle mother, whose blessed soul again seems looking at me through those mild eyes of thine. I'll make the concern that brought ye hither as much and heartily my own as if I stood in thy own square-toed Nonconforming shoes."

Chapter XVI.

The Westminster Assembly of Divines—Rev. Mr. Baxter's preaching—A Royal Audience.

RARELY have I looked toward the cunningly-wrought brazen gates of King Henry's Chapel, in the old historic Abbey of Westminster, without in my mind's eye seeing pass between them that notable company of godly, learned men, in their plain black coats and bands, who near thirty years agone (after prayer, fasting, and other solemn religious exercise) first met there, to hold conference touching such discipline and government in the church, as might among themselves be deemed most agreeable to God's Word, and likewise tend preserve peace and concord in the realm. If these grave and seasoned divines occasionally differed touching matters of sentiment, or on certain points of opinion, yet as the shades of God's bow of promise in

the heavens, though composed of divers hues, do yet mingle together harmoniously as a complete and glorious whole, so did they to a man prove of one mind in their theologic doctrines, which, free from all taint of heresy, were sound and Calvinistic —in a word, those of the Church of England herself. Moreover, they strove ably to clear and vindicate those doctrines from the foul aspersions and false interpretations cast upon them by semi-papist wolves in sheep's clothing, within a sacred and consecrated pale. The reverend ministers who made the Westminster Synod were the honour of the Parliament party, and so far (as was maliciously charged against them by their enemies) from stirring up the people by seditious preaching, and thus proving a main cause of the civil commotions of their time, a number of their body mildly conformed to certain exactions, all more or less painful, because they esteemed some things lawful in case of necessity; though certes they longed to have that necessity removed. Till the bishops proceeded so far as to approve recreation on the Sabbath-day (for 'tis well known "The Book of Sports" was printed with their lordships' sanction), and the bowing to altars, and other Popish observances, likewise *dancing*, which above all things that could be conceited by the loose, vain, and carnal, was a grief of mind to men of such exceeding gravity, solidity, mortification, and holiness—yea, this Herodias

dancing proved to them an abhorrence inexpressible.

Therefore, when the Parliament set about a sifting reformation in those evil practices, godly persons could not fail rejoice and be thankful thereat, seeing how many pious ministers, with their wives and families, by steadfastly refusing to fall in with such monstrous sinful doings, were ruined and undone in temporal estate, against conscience, against all bowels of compassion.

These Westminster worthies would never rest satisfied with giving God the cap and knee at public service and prayer-time, and direct afterward yield themselves up to all manner of gaiety and wickedness—yea, as I've read of certain fabled fruits, be fair and shining outwardly, but to the core full of ashes and rottenness: if in the beginning of their troubles they had studied how to please God and men *both*, they quickly discovered that to be in favour with those who are out of favour with Him is a reproach and disgrace, instead of an honour; therefore they hasted free themselves from yoke so intolerable, and espousing the sacred cause of religion and civil freedom, put on "righteousness as a breast-plate," and were "clad with zeal as with a cloak."

During this my stay here, 't has been my happy privilege to renew old acquaintance with one Master Amos Burroughs, a kinsman of the eminent

Master Jeremiah Burroughs, who was a conspicuous member of the Westminster Assembly, helped largely in the compiling their Catechism, and was, moreover, counted among the most approved and famous of the *Triers*. This admirable (yet I conceit somewhat severe) man, in his office as trier, remembered the words, "*Try the spirit, believe not every spirit;*" he listed not the taking doctrines upon trust, without a searching trial of their soundness, and in a very faithful manner tested the sayings of ministers by the sayings of God. He knew that all is not truth that goeth for truth. The cup may be of gold that containeth a deadly poison within; and sometimes 'tis but mere copper ore what foolish pates think pure silver; therefore those that presented themselves before him for trial got it to their marrow; for, as I said, Master Jeremiah proved and sifted them by the Word of Truth itself. The birth, estate, learning, wit, or shining parts of the candidates mattered nothing at all; he rejected and trod down all these things as dirt under his feet, unless he found their possessors agreeable to, and bottomed on the truth, and presuming neither preach nor teach any other doctrine than that declared in holy written word. A poor man's genuine graces he esteemed far beyond a rich man's costliest treasure. Master Burroughs loved gifts, but graces more. "A heart," quoth he, "full of grace, is better than a head full of notions; and

many a minister speaketh much of the Lord to his flock, yet falleth grievous short of his speaking himself,—can sharply rebuke from the pulpit they who walk in the way the most go, but is not straitly careful to get in the right way himself? Neither can I abide thought of those who scruple not take Christ's money and do Satan's pleasure nimbly with it; who under a fair surplice of profession hide the foul deeds of corruption; with their tongues in church proclaim their readiness to set a crown of glory on our Lord's head, yet, alack, alack, by an unseemly walk and conversation, put a crown of thorns there in reality." And truly the pious men Master Burroughs, by the Holy Spirit's guidance, passed with acceptance through his crucible as *a trier*, and became a means of installing in livings, were such (I mind not a single exception) as set themselves heartily and laboriously to God's work, and whose light so shone before others, as in some instances to make them a blessing and an ornament to the age in which we live.

Yesterday Master Amos Burroughs (who, with all his household, have shown me "much kindness" for the Lord's sake) came to my lodging, bringing news Master Richard Baxter was a-going to preach that morning (he can do so only occasionally) at Pinner's-hall; and would I like bear him company thither?

"Right gladly," said I, "having already held

rare communion in spirit with this Master Baxter, in his holy treatise of 'The Saint's Rest,' which hath long been as a savour of most sweet odour to the soul of many a heavenward-bound pilgrim; ay, for that matter, to the whole Christian church throughout the length and breadth of the land, though its brave author hath suffered much loss, and been sorely tried for conscience' sake."

On our arrival at the hall, we found it (and 'twas a week-day) full crowded; but Master Burroughs, being very well known and respected, a passage was made for him, and he gat me a seat on a bench near the pulpit.

Some few minutes afterward, a side-door hard by was opened, and Master Baxter came forth and went up its stair—from his appearance I reckoned he had passed his third score—of a spare and slender make, with hair once of a brownish hue, still retaining somewhat of the wavy curls of youth, profusely streaked with grey, and he wears it after the fashion of godly ministers from foreign parts, under a small skull-cap of black velvet. The complexion of Master Baxter's face is purely, deeply pale—pain, as well as thought, having set its signet there, and worn, and somewhat sharpened the clear-cut features. I've since learned he is the severely-disciplined, unmurmuring servant of Him who ofttimes, "like a refiner's fire," trieth and purifieth His best-beloved, choicest servants in the flesh,

" that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness;" for Master Baxter suffereth under the same hidden malady which long since secretly and insidiously began sap the foundations of dear Master Burdwood's mortal life; and I fear me, from what I've lately heard, threatens at no very distant period to destroy it. But Master Baxter's face hath a sweeter, more refined gravity, a calmer, holier tenderness of expression, than, methinks, I ere before observed in human, though I may have dreamed of such for *spiritual* countenance. Awhile he bowed his head upon his clasped hands, which rested on a large Bible; through a high, narrow window direct behind him the sun was softly shining; its light descended upon that bowed head, and when he slowly raised it and stood up before the people, the rays encircled his thin, white temples as with a glory.

Now, were I to live upon earth a thousand years, never should I forget this man's preaching, though pen of an evangelist could alone describe fitly its wonderful richness, fulness, and unction; moreover, the argument of his sermon, likewise the application thereof, had a keenness and force which I compared to a sword of finest-tempered steel, cutting its way through the pith of a knotty or difficult scriptural passage, the golden threads whereof others less gifted must seek unravel by a more tedious process, and thereby not unfrequently tangle

them the more. Yet in Master Baxter's discourse, which I believe in a measure resembleth that the saints above hold with and hear from each other, there was so rare and happy a union of reason and persuasion, that, while he convinced the understanding, he failed not gain the heart—yea, all its fountains were opened for him, able to look steadfastly into the profoundness of depths serene and transparent to his eye. I noted, too, with much approval, that both rebuke and warning were followed by appeals which methought none save hearts of stone might long resist unmoved; and here his fervid earnestness became mingled with a certain noble negligence of style; for this great mind, surcharged with its subject, seemed as if it could no longer stoop to the mere eloquence of words, even when they were most piercing in their sweetness and divine in their power. At conclusion of his sermon, Master Baxter spake of the future blessedness of the Lord's elect—of the *everlasting rest* awaiting God's saints—till he appeared to me as one who had already partaken of that rest he knew so ravishingly how to describe. Surely he dwelleth on the borders of "The Holy City," the "New Jerusalem"—yea, I do believe in beatific vision hath been permitted look *within* its gates of pearl.

Master Baxter preached a good space (for he turned his hour-glass), yet it appeared a very little moment of time. But they who would grow

aweary of *his* preaching, would grow aweary of heaven itself.

On returning to my lodging, right glad was I to perceive a page of Lord Haverford's waiting for me; he brought a brief missive from the Earl, who requested I would immediately after reading it commit myself to the guidance of this, his messenger; a coach was likewise sent to convey me to the palace, where he hoped receive and conduct me to the King's presence.

May the Lord (prayed I inwardly) enable me to speak before his Majesty with sufficient wisdom and discreetness; so that the honest statement of an insignificant person, like myself, shall find its way to his heart. Then I bethought me of these words as in a certain point of view not inapplicable to one in my situation: "When we are taken before rulers for His name's sake whom we serve, it shall be given us, in that very hour, what we shall say." And I pondered over them to such purpose, that by the time the coach stopped at the palace entrance, I felt cool and collected as ever I'd been in my life.

Scarce was I set down, ere Lord Haverford, kindly greeting me, led the way to the King's audience-chamber. We passed through noble and princely halls and galleries, where gay gentlemen of his Majesty's household, bluff yeomen of the guard, and now and then a fair lady with sweep-

ing train, borne by little pages in attire glittering and fantastic as the scarlet and tinsel apes are dizened with, might all be seen.

"I confess," whispered the Earl, "that I found more difficulty in gaining the King's consent to grant this audience than I counted on, though he was too good-natured to hurt an old friend by direct refusal. But, kinsman, a word of caution for you: remember that a royal ear is soon wearied."

As my lord spoke, the folding-doors at end of the gallery which separated us from the presence of a sovereign of three kingdoms were thrown open, and at the upper part of a lofty, richly-furnished chamber I beheld a gentleman, reclining carelessly in a gilded chair, above which was blazoned the arms of England; a few other persons, seeming (save that they were all standing) near as much at their ease as himself, chatted unrestrainedly together, some little distance from the gentleman in the chair, who, of course, I immediately recognised as the King. He appeared above middling stature, and well enow shaped, his complexion brown to swartness, and, I supposed to suit its hue, he wore a large black periwig; his eyes were dark, brilliant, and expressive, yet had a rolling, ogling kind of look, which, taken with a certain sensual fulness in the formation of his lips and chin, spake him a man of appetite. He was dressed in a plain, un-

trimmed suit of black velvet, and his costly lace neck-band had the most careless twist imaginable; the only personal decoration which distinguished him, was a star and ribbon across his doublet. Three little spaniels, of a beauty that for their kind might be called incomparable (all other dogs of this sort I've seen being turnspits by comparison), brushed familiarly against the silk hose of their royal master, their long ears nearly touching the Persian carpet on which his footstool rested; and certainly, wherever I had seen that master, I should have set him down as a person of the highest rank, from the perfection of his deportment and manner, which might be called the very grace of simplicity itself—a grace that appertaineth almost as a birthright to they of most distinguished lineage and breeding. True, I know in part the nameless charm of their stately, or airy, and witty, but *always* polished address, is in good measure the result of very early careful training, and ofttimes serveth only as a varnished mask for the foulness and emptiness it covers.

The King smiled when he perceived us advancing, and never have I seen smile which made a face far enow from handsome so exceeding pleasant to look upon; a sunbeam lighting up a sombre object gives it not more beauty than did this arch brightness impart to his countenance. Extending his hand, which the Earl, dropping upon one knee,

in very courtly manner, saluted, his Majesty, after regarding myself for a moment, was pleased also to show me the same mark of condescension. Truly, as far as mere *outside* is concerned, he may be called a "most gracious" prince.

Then, in a voice which at times had so mirthful a sound that it contradicted the grave expression of his features, the King asked me a few questions, and by them I discovered he was very well informed of the reason which caused my sudden flight to town; yet, with some appearance of curiosity, he signified his pleasure to hear what I had to say for myself.

I thereupon (taking, as I conceited, sharp heed of Lord Haverford's caution) drew briefly a picture, and truth made me a faithful limner, of what his *most loyal* (I laid much stress on these words) Nonconforming subjects in the west suffered at the hands of their Episcopal oppressors.

He heard me good-naturedly but indifferently, toying all the while with the silken ears of his little spaniels. Unpromising as this appeared, I quitted not my vantage-ground before solemnly declaring that as our principles are sound, and lives sober and peaceable (here his Majesty yawned slightly, and Lord Haverford gave me a meaning glance), likewise our obedience to the law indisputable, saving those points wherein, we believed, we only followed the Word of God for a guide in acting as we did,

therefore I humbly trusted he would see fit exert his royal authority in our behalf.

"Odds fish!" cried the King—for with these two foolish, senseless expletives his commonest remarks are perpetually garnished, let their subject be a bishop or a mountebank—"Odds fish! Mr. Hicks, we've been told ye yourself have been doing something with your pen of late, and what your tongue can" (and he laughed merrily) "we've now, methinks, had pretty fair taste of. There's a certain bookish thing of yours which hath a mighty ill odour in the nostrils of our lords the bishops; and they, along with divers justices of the peace, complain loudly thereof, demanding it should be burned at Tyburn. Odds fish! man, ye must have a craze in your pate to venture do aught of this sort."

"I'm sane enough, your Majesty, God be thanked—for oppression hath sometimes made wiser men than me go mad: yet doth their madness, and the wild acts which spring from it, lie at the door of they who torture and distract them; and such there be, O King, who do thus daily by certain of your truest and faithfullest lieges, whom the justices beyond all law have very much wronged."

"Then, odds fish! they shall be righted, take our royal word for it, we'll see they are."

But even as I bowed in token of gratitude for the gracious assurance, this Scripture darted vividly

to my remembrance, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes;" and the thought, "*he* whose son ye are made *the word of a king* a jest for even the false themselves to mock at," would obtrude itself.

A sign from Lord Haverford informed me I must consider my audience ended; and his Majesty smiling, and again gracefully extending his hand for me to salute, repeated the assurance just given, that the wrongs of his Nonconforming subjects should be redressed.

The Earl, in a subsequent conversation, after we had quitted the royal presence, expressed himself as confident the King seriously means to keep his promise (the Lord grant he may); and that by virtue of his supreme power in ecclesiastical matters, he will shortly suspend and perhaps cancel the severe penal laws, now put in such barbarous force by ill-judging, violent men against the Nonconformists; in this case, they will have leave to repair and build their meeting-houses anew. Ah, if so blessed a state of things do come to pass, may the ministers and the members of their flocks prove humble and modest in their prosperity, as they showed themselves firm and unshaken in their adversity. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints," may abundant utterance be given the

ministers to open their mouths boldly in making known "the mystery of the Gospel;" and may He who loves to see the face of His church beautiful, wipe away her tears, and present her to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy, and without blemish;" and "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord."

I had almost forgotten to jot down that since I came here I've been offered a large preferment (which though the Earl's interest might easily be obtained me) if I would *moderately* conform—in other words, remain passive under Episcopal domination. I said at once, on receiving this proposal, "No temptation shall bring me to that;" nor do I look forward to be one of they who will enjoy the promised grant of princely favour. I pray that in the end it may not prove a cruel mockery and deception; yet all I've learned of the Court and its tricksy ways seemeth fuller of falsehood, hollowness, vice, and corruption than my simpleness of nature could before have supposed possible. The nobleman to whose good offices I hold myself so greatly indebted (for solely owing to his influence I can now return without apprehension to my family) is not wholly escaped from taint of its pollution; and yet, in heart, I feel sure he must loathe its glaring wickedness. Then he hath such goodly gifts and graces of mind, person,

and estate, that it grieveth me to see them thus perverted. Never shall he lack the earnest prayer of a sincere soul at a throne of grace, while John Hicks can offer one on His behalf.

I have already spoken in this my note-book (at the last leaf of which I'm come) of my wife's hearty willingness to leave England, and for aye. Some natural regrets, in so doing, we must experience poignantly; but unless Providence interpose and visibly direct otherwise, soon after I rejoin my family (and I set out to-morrow), we shall embark in the good ship "Heron," which next month sails from Plymouth for America. I feel like one about to be freed from the fetters of a galling chain, and whose home after much suffering is at last found. Our God, the God of our fathers, hath hitherto been with us, yea, will to the end; and that New World, wherein (with certain dear and pious friends, who design company us across the sea) we seek cast our future earthly lot with theirs who have already founded there so prosperous and flourishing a colony, hath ofttimes, when I've been most sorely hunted and distressed, filled me with ardent longings and conjectures of its majestic realities: those mighty rivers and mountain fastnesses, primeval forests and untrodden wildernesses, where even foot of the swart and painted salvage man ne'er yet ventured, rise before my mind's eye in dim and mystic grandeur; and these sublime images suggest

nought save peaceful, soothing, tranquil, and happy thoughts. In my night-dreams and day-musings they seem to beckon and invite me, whispering softly, "*With us* is thy appointed place, where thou shalt again labour, more than hitherto thou hast been able, in thy Master's vineyard; and the children's children of thee and thy good wife rise up and make both her old age and thine most blessed." Amen.

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